

2dartist

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132

Issue 132 | December 2016

Bright energetic illustrations

Tyson Murphy showcases
some of his personal and
professional artwork

plus

- Vibrant and colorful concepts
- Dark and macabre illustrations
- Speed paint magic effects: fire
 - Sci-fi and fantasy quick tips
- Reinvent the return of Persephone
 - and much more!

Editor's Letter



ANNIE MOSS
Junior Editor









**2dartist is now on
Instagram!**

Welcome to 2dartist issue 132!

In issue 132 we discuss careers with Riot Games' principle artist Tyson Murphy, and environment artist Tim Kaminski. We also speak to illustrator Shawn Coss who shares his macabre sketches, and Tom Fox demonstrates how he harnesses the power of Photoshop when sketching.

Also in this issue, Klaus Pillon shows how to speed paint a scene with dramatic fire effects, and comic illustrator Sykosan shows how to paint a stylized sci-fi character. You can follow Pavel Kolomeyets quick tips for painting sci-fi and fantasy themed illustration details, and learn from Zack Cy as he reinvents the Greek myth of Persephone with light effects. Plus plenty more painting tips and artistic inspiration!

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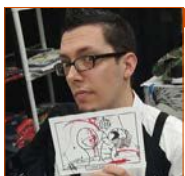
TYSON MURPHY

Tyson Murphy studied animation and illustration at Brigham Young University, Utah, USA. He has worked at Disney Interactive and Blizzard Entertainment, and currently works as a principle artist at Riot Games.



TIM KAMINSKI

Tim Kaminski is a concept artist and art director in the entertainment industry with a Masters in Illustration. He specializes in environments with a strong sense of light and color.



SHAWN COSS

Shawn Coss is based in Akron, Ohio, in the USA. He is an artist, writer, and designer for the ever popular webcomic cartoon show *Cyanide & Happiness*, and has a distinctly dark, macabre style.



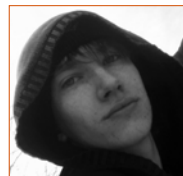
TOM FOX

Tom Fox is a concept artist from Bristol, UK. Previous clients include Universal Studios and Aardman Animations. He has no formal art education, and learned mostly through books or short online courses.



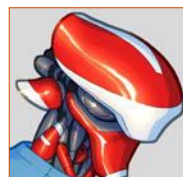
KLAUS PILLON

Freelance concept artist and illustrator Klaus Pillon graduated in 3D production before focusing on his primary love: 2D artwork. Largely self-taught, he now works on games and movies.



PAVEL KOLOMEYETS

Pavel Kolomeyets is a freelance concept artist and illustrator from Pavlodar, Kazakhstan. He creates vibrant, ethereal sci-fi and fantasy artworks featuring warriors, monsters and special effects.



SYKOSAN

Sykosan is a freelance animator and illustrator based in London, UK. Sykosan has over twelve years experience working in the industry and is the founder of animation studio Animation Squad.



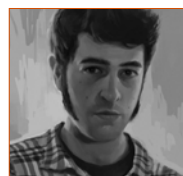
ZACK CY

Zack Cy is a freelance concept artist and illustrator from Penang, Malaysia. He is currently working as an art college lecturer at The One Academy in Penang, and reimagines the story of Persephone.



PEI ZHANG

Pei Zhang is an illustrator at Rocket Gaming Systems, Las Vegas, USA. He has a Master's degree in Game Development and has previously worked for Tencent Games, Riot Games, Runic Games and KOEI TECMO.



BRAM 'BOCO' SELS

Bram 'Boco' Sels is a freelance illustrator and concept artist from Belgium. He has worked in the entertainment industry since 2012 for clients including Wizards Of The Coast, Ubisoft and Psyop.

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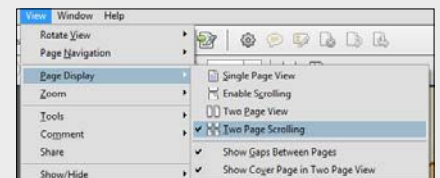
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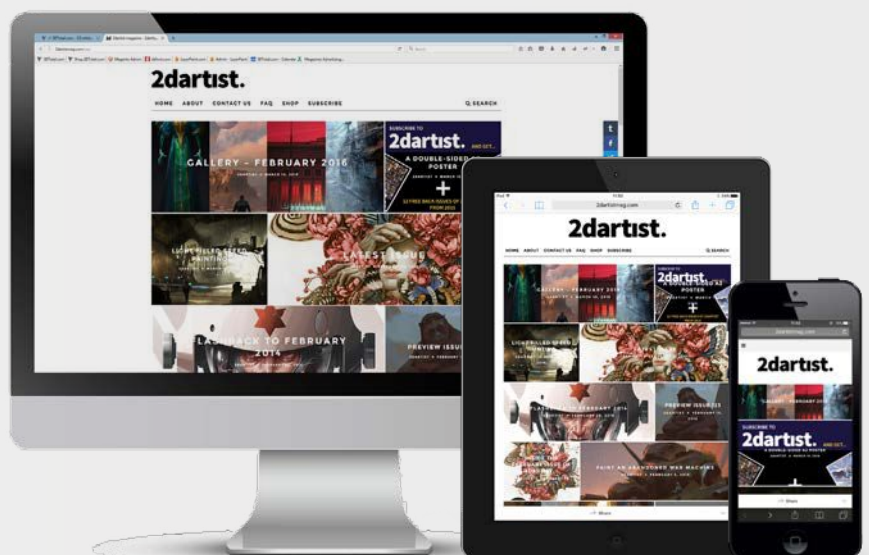
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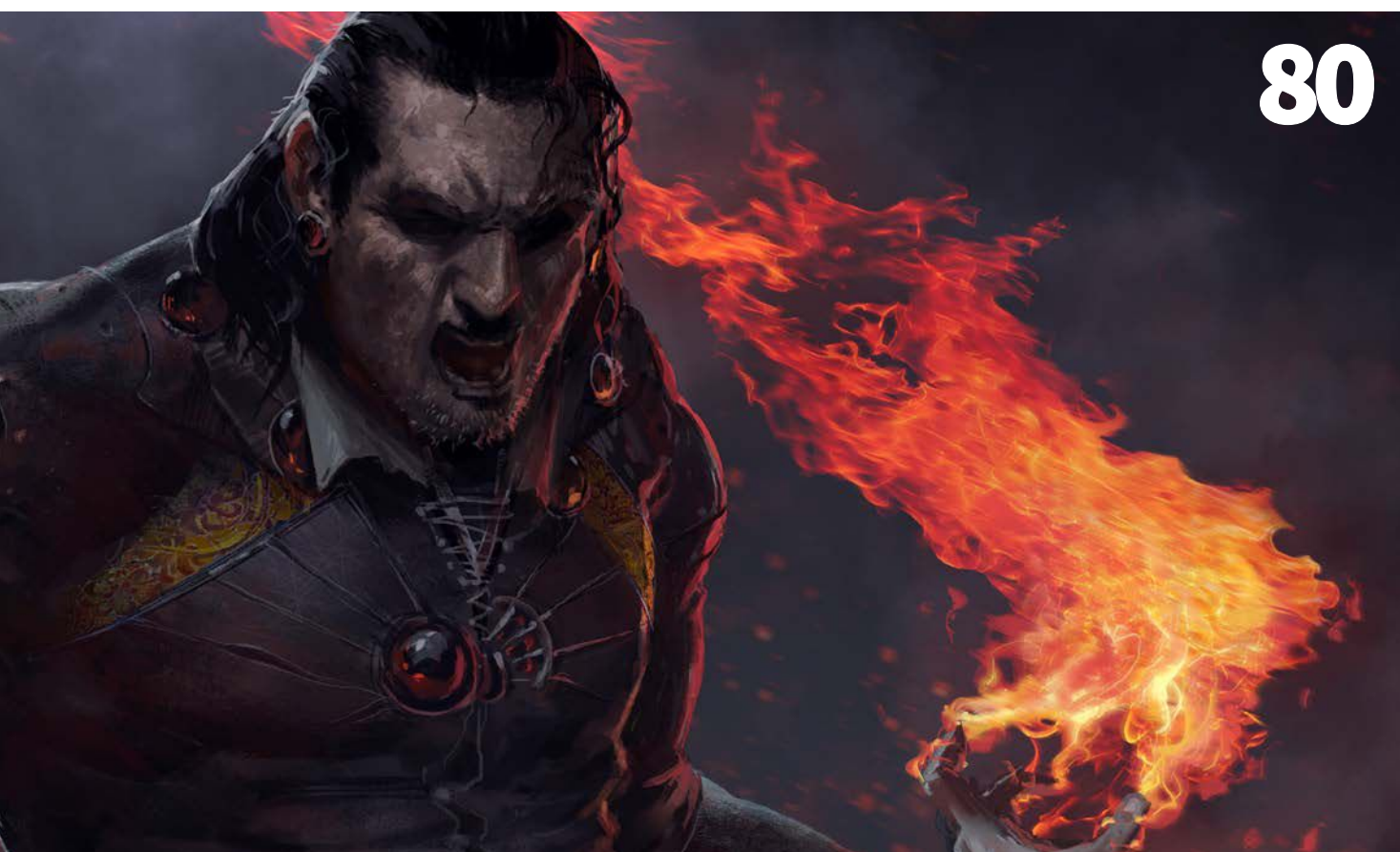
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The Artist



Tyson Murphy

artstation.com/artist/murph

Interviewed by:

Annie Moss

Tyson Murphy studied animation and illustration at Brigham Young University, Utah, USA. He has worked at *Disney Interactive* and *Blizzard Entertainment*, he currently works as a principle artist on *League of Legends* at Riot Games.

Bright, energetic illustrations

Principle artist at Riot Games, Tyson Murphy talks to us about keeping motivated and working on *League of Legends* ▶

All images © Tyson Murphy unless otherwise stated



Over the past seven years Tyson Murphy has had a successful career working in the entertainment and gaming industry. So far he has contributed to some well known projects, including *Toy Story 3*, *Diablo 3*, and *World of Warcraft*. Tyson currently works for Riot Games as a principle artist on *League of Legends*. He is really passionate about his work and describes his illustrations as bright and energetic. Tyson credits the people in his life as being the biggest influences on his career and success. There is nothing he loves more than chilling out with his beautiful wife and amazing kids...

2dartist: Hi Tyson, thanks for talking to *2dartist*! Could you start by introducing yourself a bit to the readers?

Tyson Murphy: Hi everyone! I'm Tyson and I've been working in the industry for about seven years. I love games and animation, have worked in both, and have always gravitated towards a stylized approach in my own artwork. I try to focus on emotion more than anything else in my artwork. I've had some pretty good successes so far, and even more failures! I like being open and honest with people, and I also like making people laugh. I am married to my high school sweetheart and we have two amazing children.

2da: Your works have a really distinctive style, often with bright colors and energetic poses. Do you have any tips for readers who want to recreate this in their own work?

TM: The best tip I can think of is to really enjoy bright and energetic artwork; I know that sounds like a no-brainer, but I spent a LOT of time looking at distinctly stylized art over the years, only because I love it. If you don't love it and aren't consuming large amounts of it, it will never have a chance to blend into your own work. More specifically, I would say to first focus on creating interesting images with a limited color palette and reserved poses, and then continually layer on more and more.

2da: Where do you find inspiration for your work? Which other artists do you particularly admire?

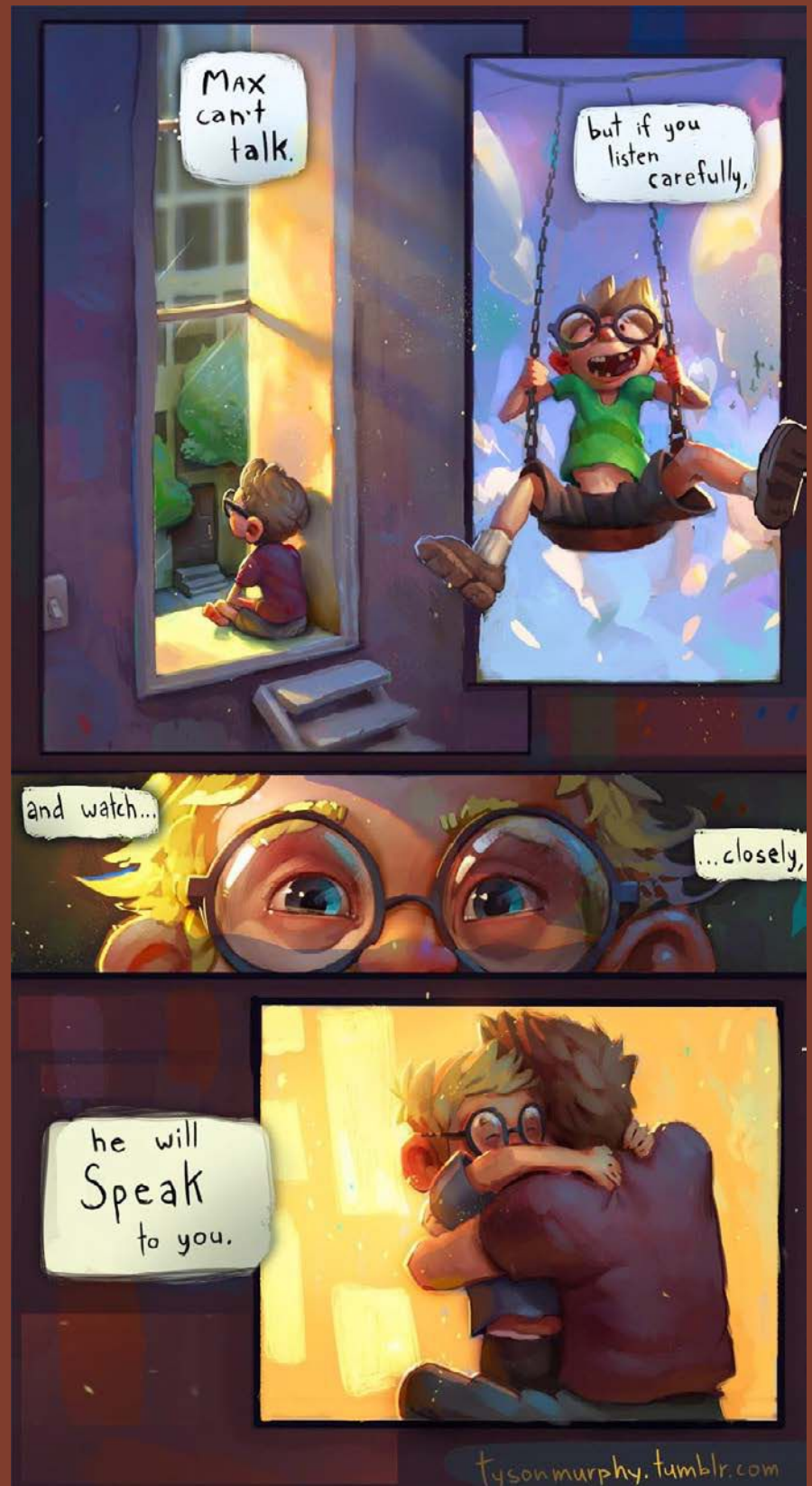
TM: I've had a lot of life experiences so far, some very positive and some very negative. Both extremes are great sources for communicating with others through my art. Secondly, inspiration comes from experiencing other's lives through movies, music, art, animation, and books. There are too many visual ►

- This piece came from experimenting with colors I don't normally use – the sickly yellow/green is so off-putting to me, but kinda works for this piece



Tyson's significant artwork

This is the piece I'm most proud of in my life, so far. It's been an incredible experience creating art for massive projects that reach millions of people, but this piece is 100% my own and comes straight from me. My son Max is autistic, and I made this for his mother, I wanted her to know that I'll always be here for her and Max and that I share the heartbreak as well as the joy that comes with having Max as our son. I received so many emails after posting this piece, from other parents of special needs children, from schools wanting to print it out, even from people who just didn't understand and were grateful for the glimpse into our life.



artists I admire to name them all, but the artists who have had the biggest impact on my art are also my good friends: Sam Nielson, Ryan Woodward, Ryan Metcalf, Chris Robinson, Rob Sevilla, Kory Hubbell, Joe Olson, Dan LuVisi, Gino Whitehall, Mel Milton, Jake Wyatt, and Anthony Holden, just to name a few.

2da: If you could meet any artist (past or present) what would you ask them and why?

TM: Whoever invented Krispy Kreme donuts could be considered an artist, right? I'd ask them for the secret recipe, just kidding. But seriously, have you tried those things? They're like hot circles of heaven. Mmm....What was the question again?

I'd like to meet J.C. Leyendecker, I'm a huge fan of his artwork, but I'd jump right into asking him about his life outside of art, and try to dig into the emotional reasons behind his work. I talk to a lot of (living) artists, and I've found that their insecurities, life experience, and passions have the most impact on me when it comes to improving and growing as an artist.

“I want to use more traditional painting media, probably oil and acrylics would be my first choice”

2da: What are your preferred tools to work with? Are there any tools you find yourself using again and again?

TM: I use Photoshop a lot in my 2D work; 3D-Coat is my go-to software for hand painted texturing. Col-Erase pencils have stuck with me through the years, and I also have a strong affinity towards watercolor. More recently, I got an iPad Pro and the Apple Pencil – so far it has the best portable digital painting/sketching product I've used; I actually do quite a bit of work on it now.

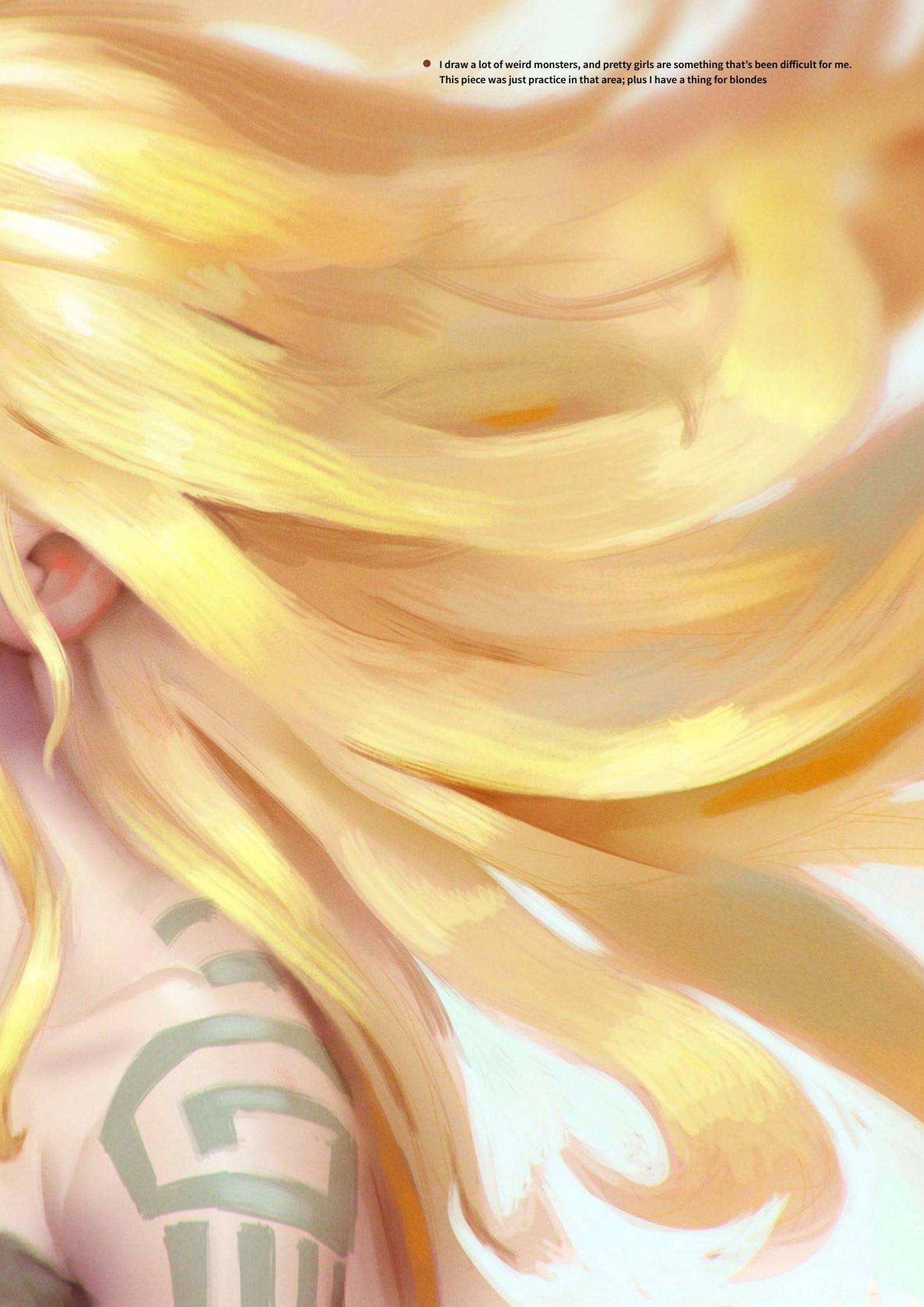
2da: Which tools and software would like to learn in the future?

TM: I want to use more traditional painting media, probably oil and acrylics would be my first choice. The digital process has a tendency to wear me out, where as traditional processes can sometimes actually reinvigorate me.

2da: How have you adapted and developed your skills over the course of your career? ►



- I draw a lot of weird monsters, and pretty girls are something that's been difficult for me. This piece was just practice in that area; plus I have a thing for blondes



● Another *Hearthstone* piece – Old God *N'zoth* – he's a pretty big deal in *WoW* lore, so I tried to do him justice
© 2016 Blizzard Entertainment





Watercolors are one of the traditional painting media I use often; it takes me a long time and I definitely need some lessons, but it's relaxing

TM: I've really had to run the entire gamut when it comes to applicable skill sets. I started as a 3D animator, have worked in 2D flash animation, 3D character art, concept art, illustration, modeling, texturing, even some FX work. I'm a firm believer that creativity and artistry shouldn't be specific to a certain skill set or toolset. I think it's made me a lot more valuable to studios, and it's also given me a lot of good opportunities in my own personal work.

2da: What do you most enjoy about working on a new project?

TM: To be honest, I've only had the chance to work on a few large projects from the very beginning. Some of those have been animation projects, and what I loved most about those was the opportunity to inject my own ideas and sensibilities into it.

A lot of the time artists work on established projects (most of my career has been this), and it can be hard to find where we fit our own voice into that. New projects offer the freedom and opportunity for artists to dig deep and say something meaningful to an audience through our art. That's really exciting to me.

2da: Are there any other areas in the art world that you'd like to branch into and why?

TM: This might be premature, but I'm really excited to try out some Virtual Reality art. I think technology will keep on growing in our lifetimes, eventually to the point that the distance between "Creator" and "Creation" will be reduced to almost nothing.

On the exact opposite end of the spectrum, I really want to learn more about traditional mediums such as clay or oil painting.

🕒 Artist Timeline

Tyson's career so far

2004 – Graduated High School, moved to Portugal for two years

2007 – Returned from living in Portugal, decided I wanted to be an artist

2008 – Accepted into BYU animation program, working hard at concept art, illustration, and 3D

2009 – Character animation internship at Disney Interactive, on *Toy Story 3*

2010 – Character art internship at Blizzard Entertainment, on *Diablo 3*

2011 – Returned to Blizzard as a Character Artist on *World of Warcraft*

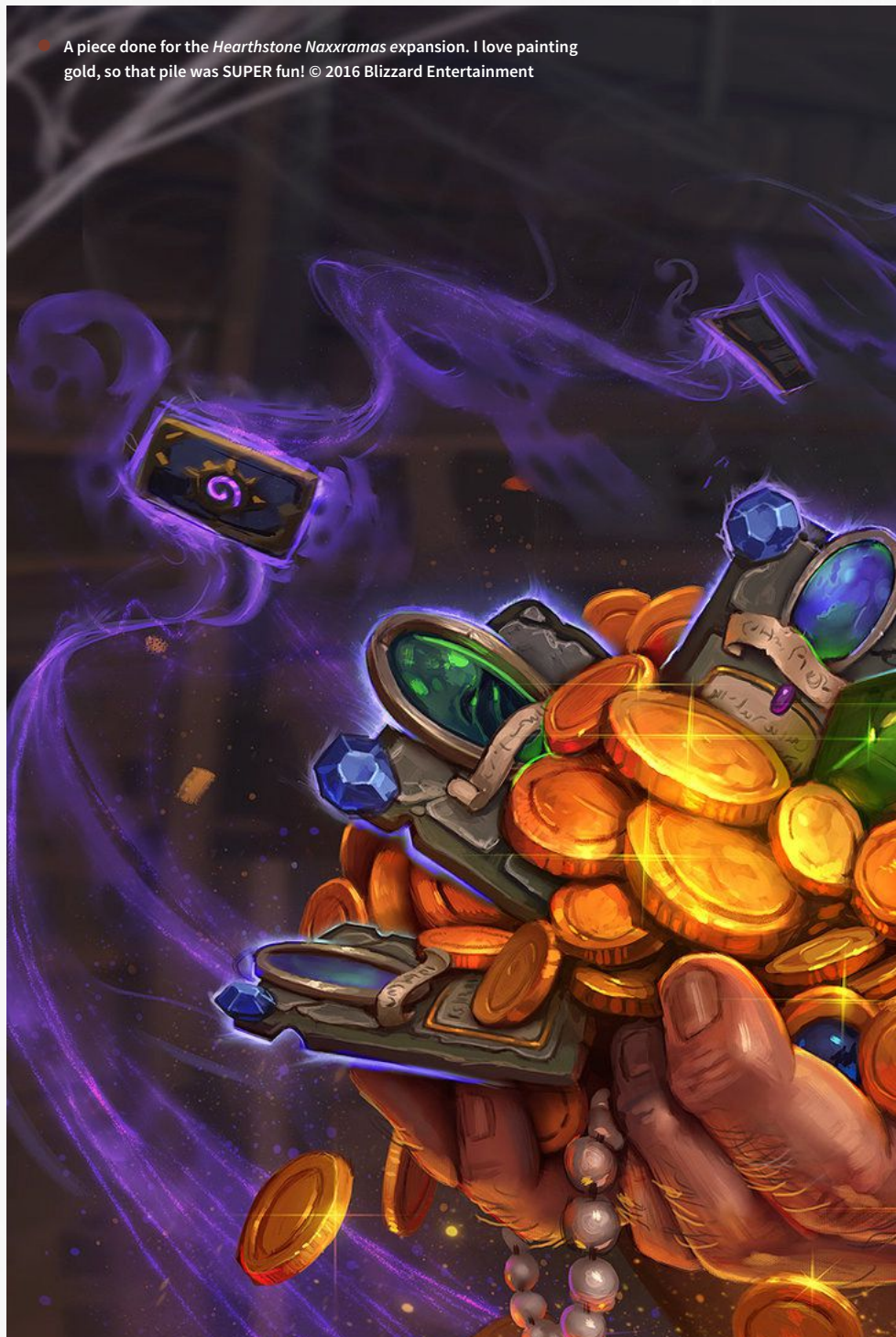
2012 – Began illustrating for *Hearthstone*

2013 – Moved into role as Lead Character Artist on *World of Warcraft*

2014 – Started creating personal comics and posting more art online

2016 – Left Blizzard, began as Principal Artist at Riot Games on *League of Legends*

● A piece done for the *Hearthstone Naxxramas* expansion. I love painting gold, so that pile was SUPER fun! © 2016 Blizzard Entertainment



“It’s a constant back and forth process, between sketching, looking at references, getting feedback from peers, and back to sketching”

2da: What initial steps do you normally take when you are first given a brief for a new project? Do you dive straight into the sketching and illustration process, or do you tend to utilize a more analytical process?

TM: I immediately start doing some sketches, just to see if my brain has any references that I can use to create what’s needed within the brief. After an initial round of sketching, I usually look at some references; these might be photographs or the work of another inspiring artist. I find that it’s a constant back and forth process, between sketching, looking at references, getting feedback from peers, and back to sketching.

2da: Do you have any tricks or tips to keep yourself motivated on a difficult project?

TM: Honestly, this is a question I’d love to ask other artists; I would love to hear what they have to say because it’s something I personally struggle with. Keeping my children fed is usually good enough motivation to push through a project I’m not particularly enjoying! I would definitely recommend having children for that reason. Other than that, my best piece of advice is the “small win” theory. Basically, if you’re having a hard time on a big project, focus in on one small aspect that you can complete quickly, and do that. The satisfaction from “small wins” is proportionally way more than ►



- This started as a study and eventually turned into something creepy. I tend to do a lot of happy, bright pieces, so I tried pushing it into something a little darker



we deserve, and it can help fuel the next “small win,” eventually leading to a completed project.

2da: Can you tell us anything about the projects you are working on at the moment?

TM: I’m doing my best to get immersed into the world and culture of Riot and *League of Legends*, and am working on a few big things pertaining to that. Other than that, I’m slowly chipping away at my own story and book that I’d like to make (once I get that motivation.... right?)

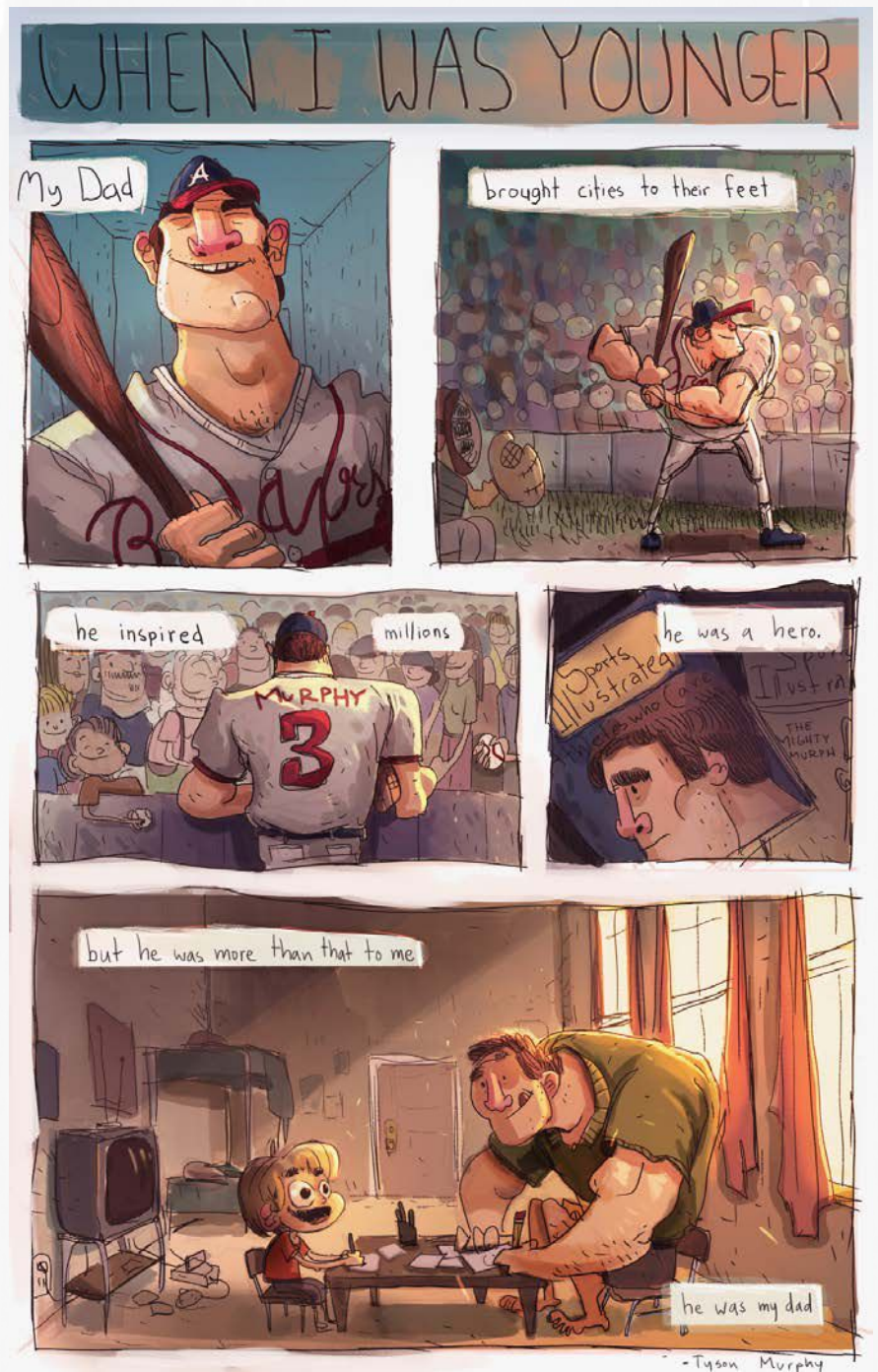
2da: When you’re not working hard on your art, what do you like to do with your time?

TM: My family takes up the majority of my time outside of work. I love watching movies with them or going to a bookstore, drinking hot chocolate and sketching, or riding bikes around Orange County with them. I love playing games, especially FPS and MMOs. More recently I started going to the gym regularly and I hope this turns in to a good habit.

2da: And finally, what should we look out for from you in the future?

TM: Keep your eyes peeled for future releases from the *League of Legends* team, and I’ll be continually doing smaller personal pieces that I will out on Facebook or Tumblr, or ArtStation. ●

Thank you Tyson for talking to 2dartist!



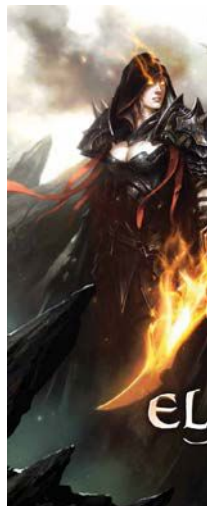
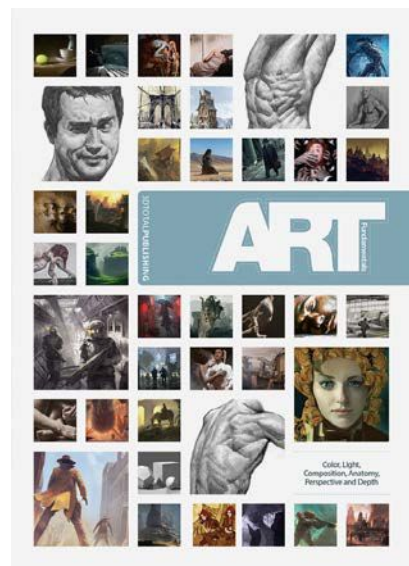
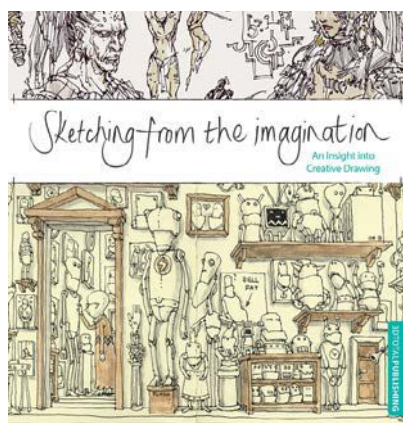
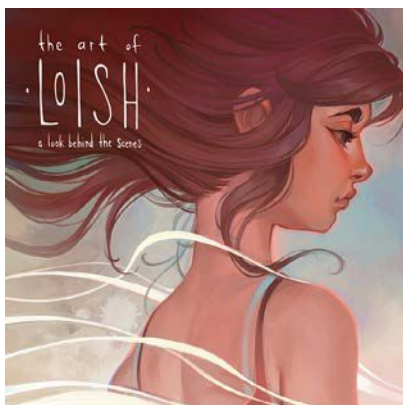
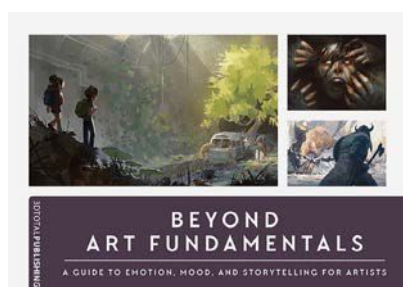
- I made this comic for my Dad (who was a baseball player in his earlier years). I wanted to let him know that I don’t care about his career, what was most important to me is that he was an amazing father

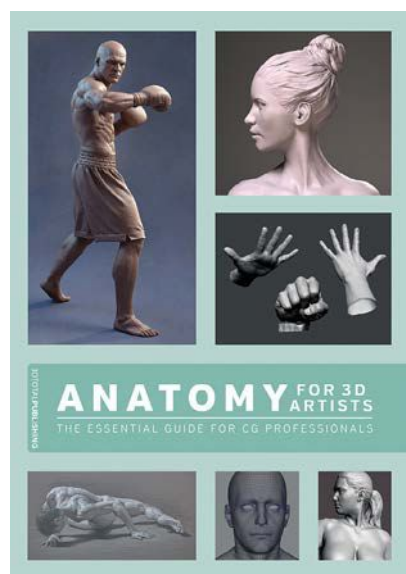
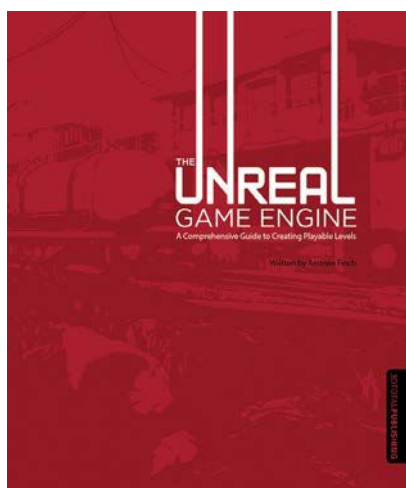
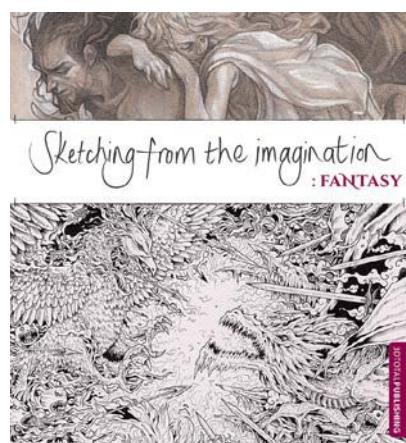
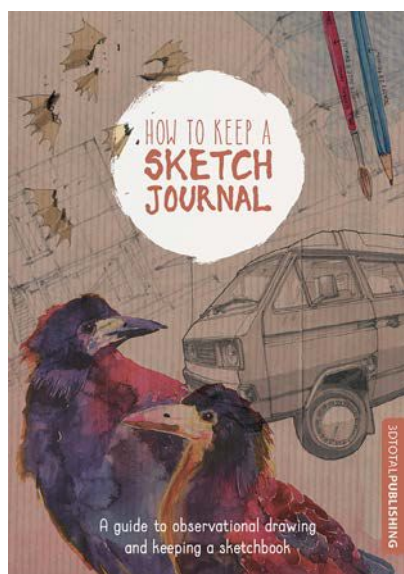
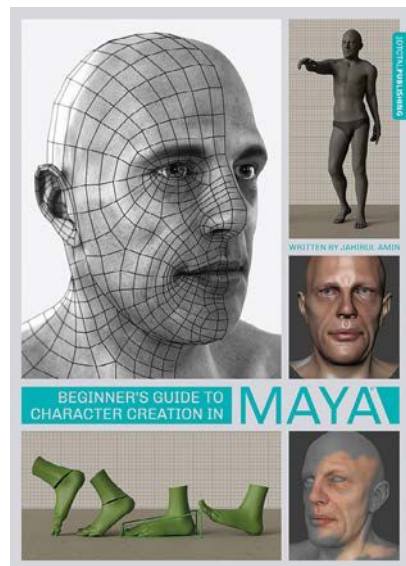
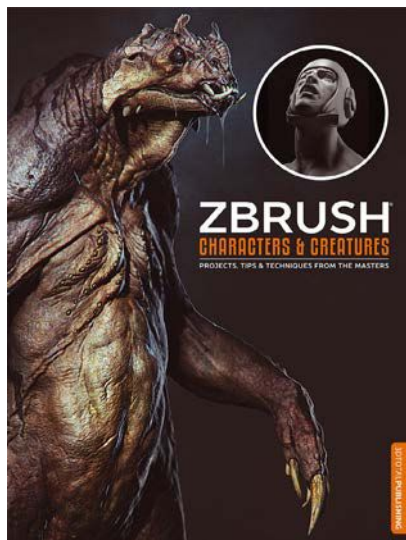
- I really love cute things, and so I painted up these guys











SIGN-UP TO THE 3DTOTAL NEWSLETTER



Vibrant and colorful concepts

We speak to freelance concept artist Tim Kaminski about his colorful portfolio, and how he overcomes artist's block ▶



The Artist



Tim Kaminski
tim.artstation.com

Interviewed by:
Annie Moss

Tim Kaminski is a concept artist and art director in the entertainment industry with a Masters in Illustration. He specializes in environments with a strong sense of light and color.

Tim Kaminski is a freelance concept artist currently working for Ready at Dawn Studios. He enjoys using a mix of 2D and 3D techniques and media to bring his paintings to life. Tim believes that having a narrative in mind while painting inspires his artwork, and vice versa, like an artistic positive feedback loop. He artfully combines ancient and modern tech to create beautifully vibrant and highly saturated paintings of far off worlds. Tim tells us about how his early gaming experiences have influenced him and led him down his current path...

2dartist: Hi Tim, thank you for talking to 2dartist! Can you kick things off by telling us a little bit about yourself and your work?

Tim Kaminski: Hey there, thanks for having me! As with a lot of other artists, I started drawing at a very young age. Mainly I drew birds – for some reason it was always birds – I still frequently add birds to my paintings with the good old bird brush. During my frenzied bird drawing days my family owned a dairy farm and sawmill that I helped out with by cleaning the mill and shoveling manure. However, as I wanted to keep all of my limbs, I was eager to get into a different line of work, and art was the perfect choice for me. It took me a little while to end up where I am now (an environment concept artist)

but I absolutely love it! I would describe my work as highly saturated; I believe the extra heaping of color helps it to stand out. I really enjoy creating worlds that blend ancient and modern tech, and with my process I combine 2D and 3D workflows into one – bouncing back and forth throughout the project.

“I think that if you have a story in your mind while painting it will come through in the small details; your imagination will be sparked to add more story elements in the image and think more thoroughly while painting”

2da: Your works are often accompanied by a passage of text giving the images a context and narrative. How does this help you develop your ideas?

TK: They both help to develop each other; sometimes I have a glimpse of the image in my mind which inspires the narrative, and other times I have a story in mind that inspires the painting. For me they exist in parallel with one another. I think that if you have a story in your mind while painting it will come through in the small details; your imagination will be sparked to add more story elements in the image and think more thoroughly while painting. ►



● The Hush of the Night

● Vikings Village







● Shattered Dimensions



● Overgrown Dungeon



timkaminski.com



Depletion

timkaminski.com



2da: What made you want to pursue a career in the industry?

TK: Definitely playing *Goldeneye* on the N64 when I was a kid! Also, my dad bought me a copy of *Unreal Tournament* for the PC and once I had played all of the content I wanted more, so I started using the editor (UnrealEd) to build my own levels. The first level I made was a reconstruction of my house; I showed it to my mom but she wasn't too thrilled to see all of the enemies dying in a recreation of her house – the bots were spawning over and over in the same location as I hadn't learned how to change that part. Even though I didn't end up going down the path of 3D environment artist, it did inspire me and lead to where I am today.

2da: How would you describe your job to a group of aliens, who have no idea what an environment concept artist is or does?

TK: Okay, let's assume I have already told them what painting is. I would tell them I paint what a different world might look like (or the world these aliens come from), as well as design all the objects they use in their world, or might be used in another world. ►



● Slim Chance





Tim's significant artwork

This is the first painting I ever did, I must have been at least eight when I painted it. Though I had drawn a lot around that time I didn't paint. This particular piece was painted on a piece of cardboard from a package of the Puffed Wheat cereal. It's nice to see this lasted through the years, and also goes to show that the supplies you have don't matter as long as you are passionate about what you are doing.



but I rarely use those. Photoshop is sort of the cold hard facts of painting digitally. I also use Maya, ZBrush, and 3D-Coat to create 3D objects for my scenes, I like mixing 2D and 3D elements as I work.

2da: How has combining skills in both 2D and 3D software benefited your work and career?

TK: Using 3D allows me to focus less on perspective and more on the overall composition and lighting. It also speeds up the process and lets me paint without worrying if the perspective is off slightly on a strangely shaped world or prop.

2da: Are there any tools, techniques, or software you would like to explore in the future, and why?

TK: I've really wanted to incorporate After Effects into my work. The ability to add some animation and bring movement and life to one of my pieces is really exciting, it would add so much to the mood, even if it is a subtle parallax shift, snowfall, or wind.

2da: Which artist or group of artists particularly inspires your work?

TK: My earliest artist inspiration was Bill Peet; he wrote for Disney, as well as drew and wrote his own children's books. His work is full of life and color, and has always been a huge inspiration for me. Later, I was really inspired by the concept work Android Jones did on the *Metroid* series, and now my main inspirations are Ryan Lang (a Disney artist) and freelance artist Espen Olsen Sætervik.

2da: If you could meet any artist (past or present) what would you ask them and why?

TK: I would have to go with Eyvind Earle. The background artworks he did for Disney movies in the 1950s are amazing. His style also sticks out to me as incredibly different to what is around both now and back then. I would love to know more about his process and what led him to the style he used in his work.

2da: Where (and when) do you feel you are at your most creative?

TK: Essentially anywhere, but if I had to choose a place it would be sitting in a forest with my back against a tree, and thousands of bizarrely shaped trees surrounding me. As for the when, that is normally while I am up late working in my studio around two in the morning. ►



● Ancestral



2da: Artist block is a problem for many creative people. Can you share a couple of tips you use when the inspiration stops flowing?

TK: Change it up and use a different medium. If I am having a bad drawing day I'll model something in 3D. If that doesn't work I might try out some traditional

media, draw in my sketchbook, or browse something that I find inspirational. Also, sometimes artist block goes hand in hand with lack of confidence, so I will draw something super simple, such as a cube spinning in 3D space. Draw something you know that will build confidence then add a bit of a twist to it to really get your mind working.

2da: What initial steps do you take when you are first given a brief for a new project?

TK: Research, just tons and tons of research. I use PureRef (a reference compiling software) to compile it all, and from there I begin creating some sketches and black and white comps.



“If I’m not painting I might be working on some personal videogame projects, designing levels, or creating tutorials for my YouTube channel”

If you could write a letter to your younger self, just starting out as an artist, what advice would you give?

Draw more, draw every day, and draw something other than just birds! Also, I would tell myself that I can start my art career early on, I didn’t really figure that out until I was a lot older; even in my early days in college I still didn’t get that.



tim.artstation.com 



2da: When you're not working hard on your art, what do you like to do with your time?

TK: I used to play a lot of games, but now I collect them more than anything. It's hard for me to not be doing some sort of art. If I'm not painting I might be working on some personal videogame project, designing levels, or creating tutorials for my YouTube channel. If not that, I might be streaming on Twitch, in which case I am painting again!

2da: Finally, where will we be able to see your work next? Are there any projects we should look out for?

TK: A few NDA projects, but *De-Formers* from Ready at Dawn Studios has been announced, so you can check that out. I also worked on *Wonky Ship*, a mobile game that is intentionally difficult to control. Beyond that, my personal work is always posted on my site, and my tutorials are on YouTube: www.youtube.com/timkaminski.

timkaminski. My Twitch handle is Randomspirits which is pretty much all of my social media. ●

Thank you Tim for talking to 2dartist!



● Gathering

🕒 Artist Timeline Tim's career so far

1993 - First painting, on a piece of cardboard

2006 - Started digital art, it was rough

2007 - Graduated NMU (Northern Michigan University) with a BFA in Illustration

2008 - Worked as a graphic designer in Chicago and hated it, this encouraged him to get into concept art!

2008 - Intern at Devil's Due Publishing

2009 - Started doing freelance concept art

2013 - Graduated SCAD (Savannah College of Art and Design) with a Masters degree in Illustration

2013 - Got a job at Kiz Studios as an environment concept artist

2014 - Started working on personal game projects using Unity

2015 - Freelance concept artist for Ready at Dawn Studios

2016 - Started his YouTube channel www.youtube.com/timkaminski with the goal to give back to the community that taught him so much

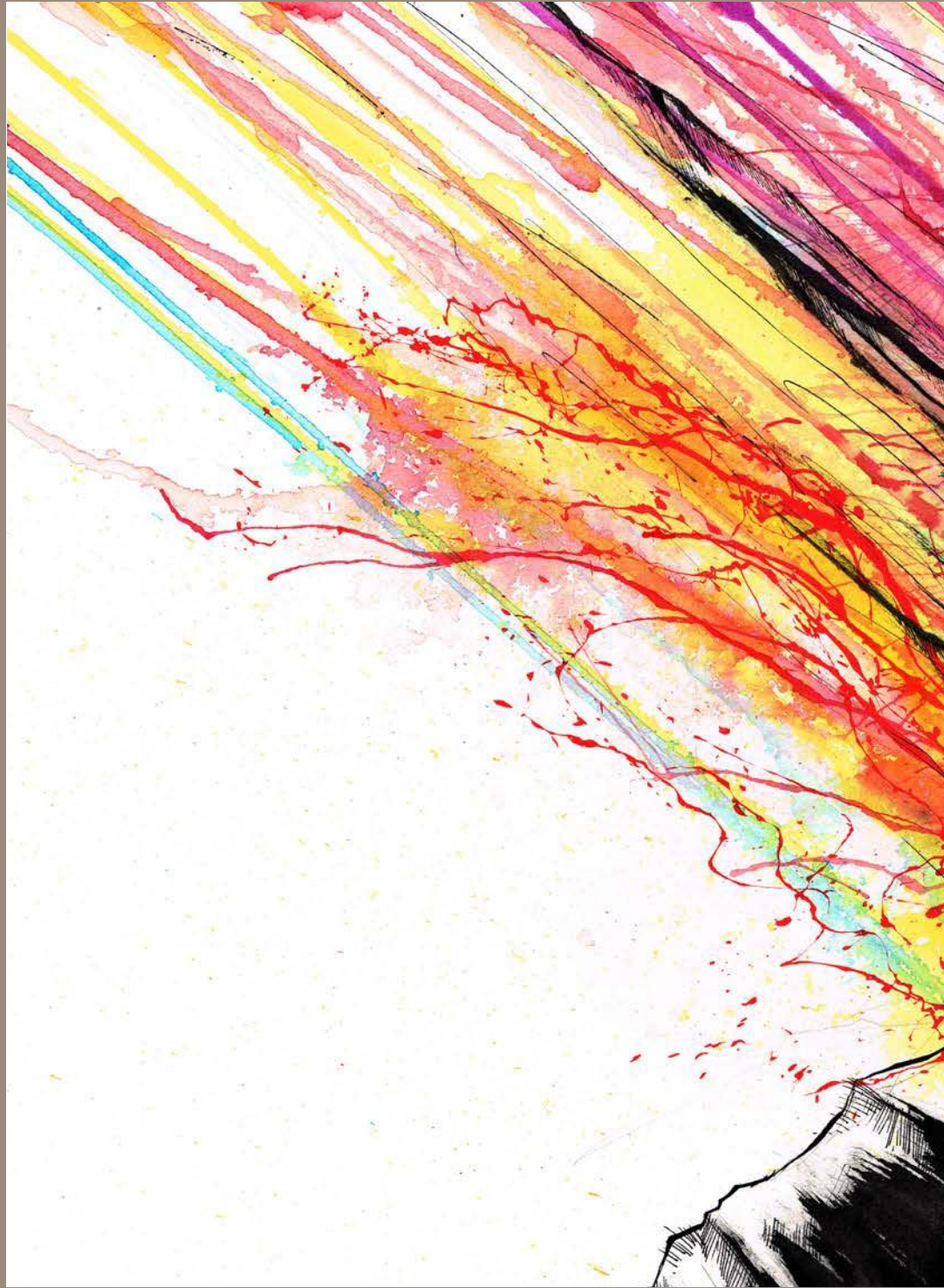
The Artist



Shawn Coss

shawncossart.com

Shawn Coss is based in Akron, Ohio, USA. He is an artist, writer, and designer for the ever popular webcomic cartoon show *Cyanide & Happiness*.



Sketchbook of Shawn Coss: Dark and macabre illustration

Explore the unsettling sketchbook of Shawn Coss, inspired by various mental health issues and his fears as a parent ▶

All images © Shawn Coss





ns

Delve into the dark and creepy world of Shawn Coss...

As far as I can remember, I've always drawn; it started with dinosaurs, moved on to videogame fan art and finally to the creepy artwork I'm known for today. My parents have always been supportive of my work; with my Dad being more practical telling me I need a real job to fall back on for security. I followed his guidance and got a degree in Nursing, and about the same time, by pure chance, was approached by Kris Wilson of *Cyanide & Happiness*. After our friendship developed, I was brought in as an artist for the widely popular webcomic. After a year of traveling all over the world to comic cons with *Cyanide & Happiness*, I realized this was the career I wanted. It's been a wild ride – I got to work on a Stephen King film, and meet celebrities who are fans of my work – the career of an artist can be very weird. What keeps me drawing is an unknown drive, it's not that I want to draw it's that I have to keep creating; I can't turn it off even if I wanted to. Sketching has helped me meet that need while constantly on the go.

Inspiration and ideas

At the risk of sounding pretentious and too "artsy," I find inspiration from everything around me. Alex Pardee stated it best that it can be something as simple as candy dots that can inspire a new creature. A lot of people assume that because of the creepier nature of art that I'm inspired by heavy metal music and horror movies. And yes, while those things help me create a new design from time to time, I find most of my ideas come from everyday life. It could be a brief conversation that struck me as funny or an odd cloud formation. I try to keep my mind open to allow any and all ideas to flood in, and then try to figure out which ones suck and which ones are worth fermenting in my think meat. I have realized that most of my ideas hit me around 3am or right before I fall asleep. I'll be all tucked in, half way to blacking out and then an idea will just scream at me like an alarm clock; sometimes I drown it out, and other times I drown in my thoughts until I get up and write/sketch it down.

Materials

Ink and pencil will always be my favorite materials in terms of comfort; I've used them so much that I've learned a lot on handling and weight of lines. My passion is to learn oil painting ►



● *I can always make you smile – to this day, still one of my most popular designs*



● Vulture king - The Vulture king feeds upon his pheasants

● *Worm food* – In the end, we're all just worm food





but I've been trying to limit what materials I focus on. I did try gouache once, and no matter how hard I tried, it just came out like a large textured pile of poop. I don't really have any loyalty to any brands. I can use a \$15 ink pen or a 50 cent one. I'm a strong believer that a tool doesn't make the artist (there may be others who might strongly disagree). I've seen some amazing artists pump out a piece of art with a Bic pen, so I think there's some merit to that notion.

“There's probably a more formal technique to drawing but I went to nursing school, not art school, so that shows you how backwards I really am as an artist”

Sketching techniques

I have a technique called “scribble lines until it makes something.” It's been the way of designing some of my more popular pieces. They all start with an empty page and no ideas; it's also a nice way to keep the hand loose. There's probably a more formal technique to drawing but I went to nursing school, not art school, so that shows you how backwards I really am as an artist. I recently discovered that when drawing I hold my pencil the same way as when writing and that is terribly wrong in the art world. You're supposed to use your shoulder while drawing from what I've been told. I'd like to put up the argument that most artists making a living never had formal training, they just created and learned as they went. Or that's what I keep trying to convince myself! ●

PRO TIP

Create for yourself

Never create what you think your audience wants to see, you'll only set yourself up for failure. I've found that the works I create for myself have been better received, and when I try to chase what I thought fans wanted, I am left feeling empty.



● *Crowsleeve* – A collection of my favorite topics – crows and skulls

● Poe – Doing Poe things, like reading books and hanging with crows

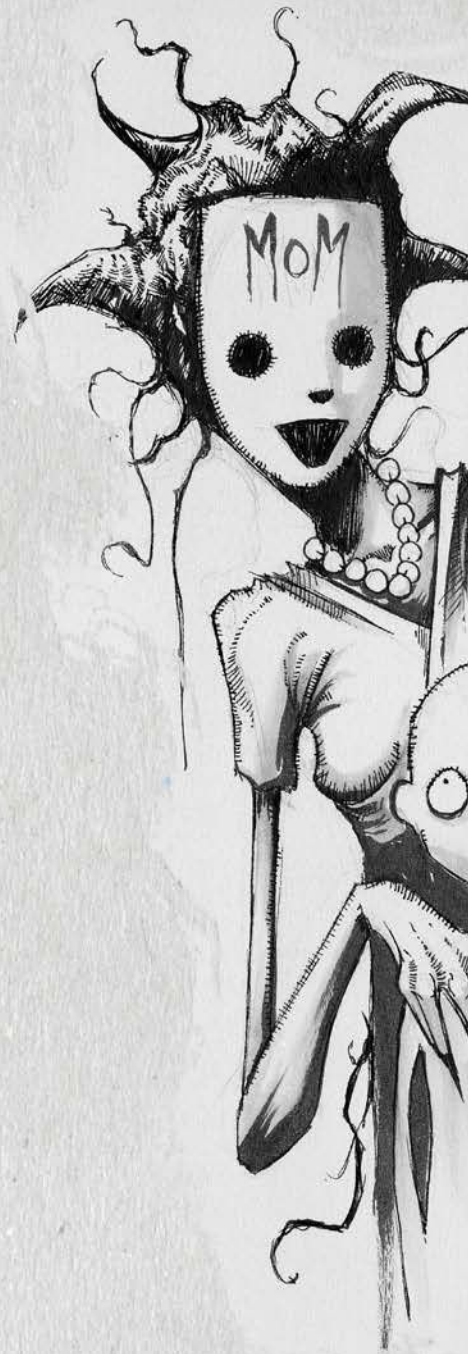


BI POLAR DISORDER



- For the month of InkTober I focused on mental health and for 31 days I created a new sketch for each disorder/illness/syndrome – *Bipolar Disorder*

CAPGRAS S

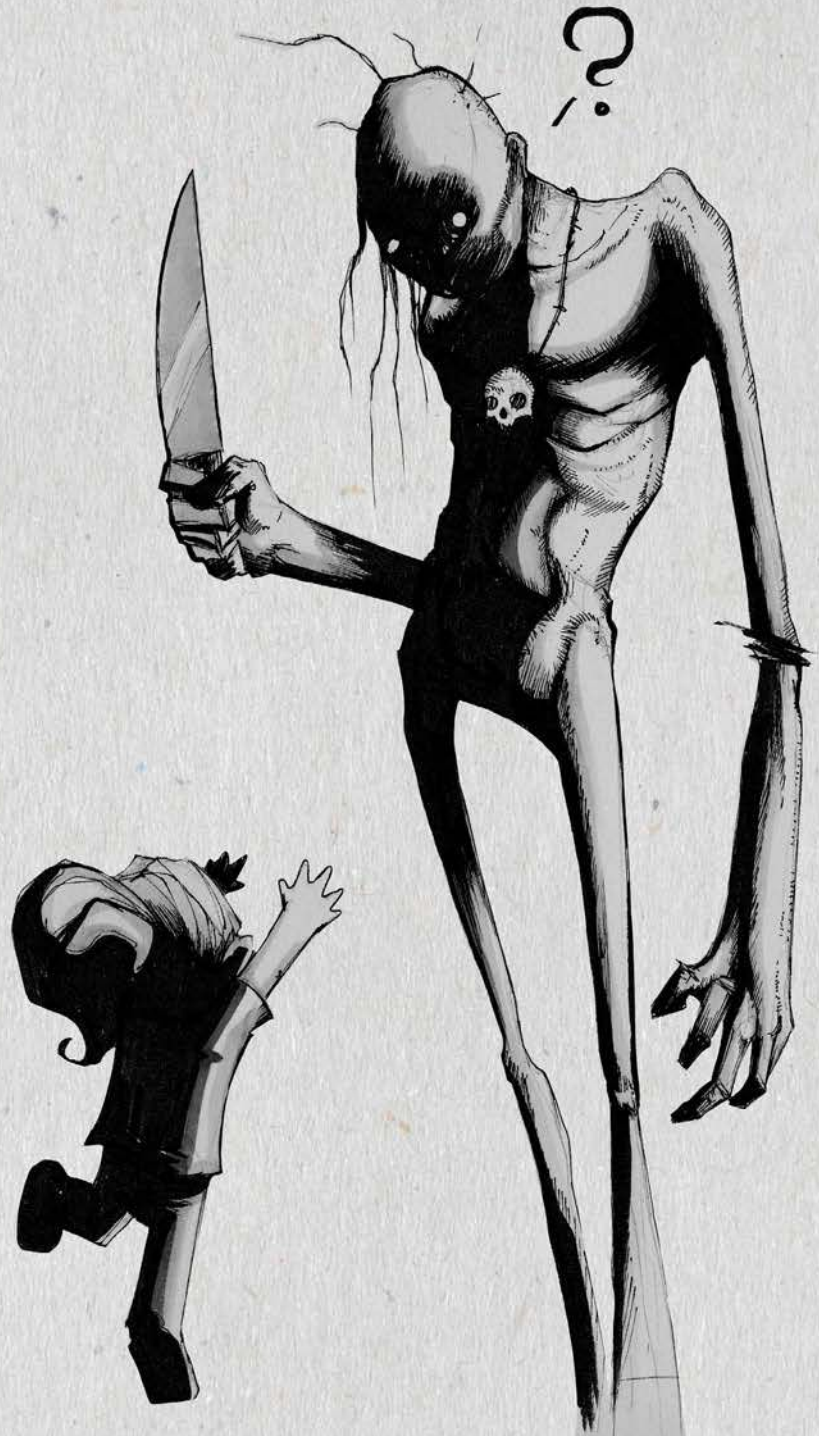


- *Capgras Syndrome* – for the month of InkTober

YNDROME



DISINHIBITED SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT DISORDER

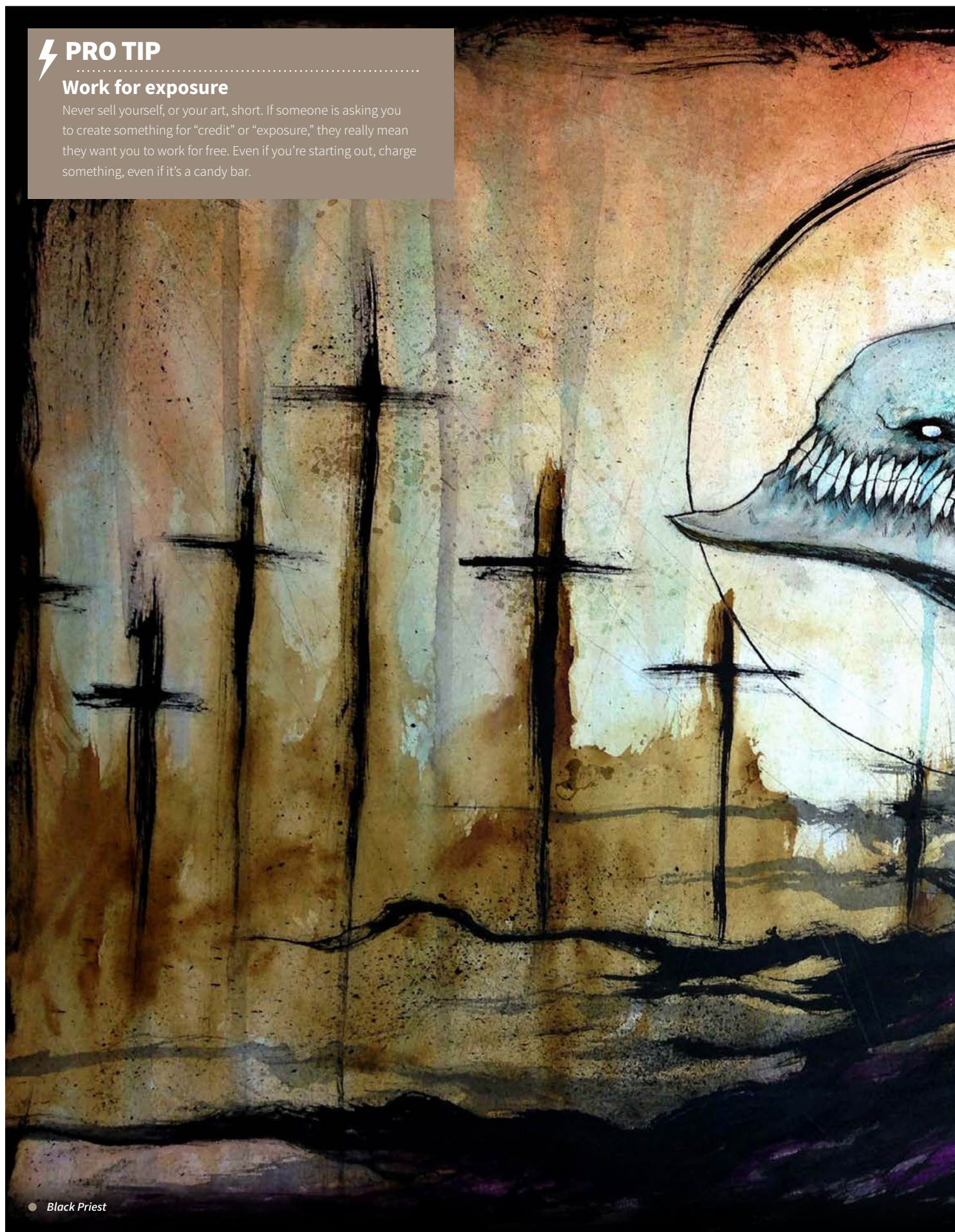


● *Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder* – for the month of Inktober

⚡ PRO TIP

Work for exposure

Never sell yourself, or your art, short. If someone is asking you to create something for “credit” or “exposure,” they really mean they want you to work for free. Even if you’re starting out, charge something, even if it’s a candy bar.



● *Black Priest*





⚡ SHAWN'S SIGNIFICANT ARTWORK

Mourning Death

This past year I had the honor of *Mourning Death* being a part of the opening show for the Ars Memoria Gallery, Chicago, USA. It's 18 × 24 inches and the largest oil painting I have ever done.

When the show opened, the gallery owner's wife, Catherine, told me about a young boy who spent a long time staring and studying the painting. A week later I found out that the boy had been murdered by his father in a murder-suicide. Being a parent myself, I was crushed and it was haunting with how everyone said they felt like the boy knew what would happen when he saw that painting. It still hurts to think about it but I can connect with the boy's mother and connect with her on an artistic level. It's the first time I discovered the healing ability of art.



- *FaveColorbook* – Artwork from my first ever horror anthology book focusing on stories taken from my fear as a new parent. The book's title is *Kindergarten* which translates to "Garden of Children"



● Breatheasy – artwork from Kindergarten



**Would you like to see
your sketches featured
in 2dartist magazine?**

We're always on the lookout for talented artists and their artwork to adorn the pages of our magazine. If you think you have what it takes, get in touch!

To submit, simply email Annie at **annie@3dtotal.com** with a selection of your images or a link to your portfolio online, plus a little information about you.

We look forward to hearing from you!

A2 POSTER | Image by Pablo Carpio

Pablo Carpio.



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Sketch like the masters

Learn how concept artist and master sketcher Tom Fox creates his dramatic drawings in Photoshop with this free chapter from *Masters of Sketching* ▶

All images © Tom Fox

The Artist



Tom Fox
tomfoxart.com

Software Used:
Photoshop

Tom Fox is a concept artist from Bristol, UK. Previous clients include Universal Studios and Aardman Animations. He has no formal art education, and learned mostly through books or short online courses.

Masters of Sketching

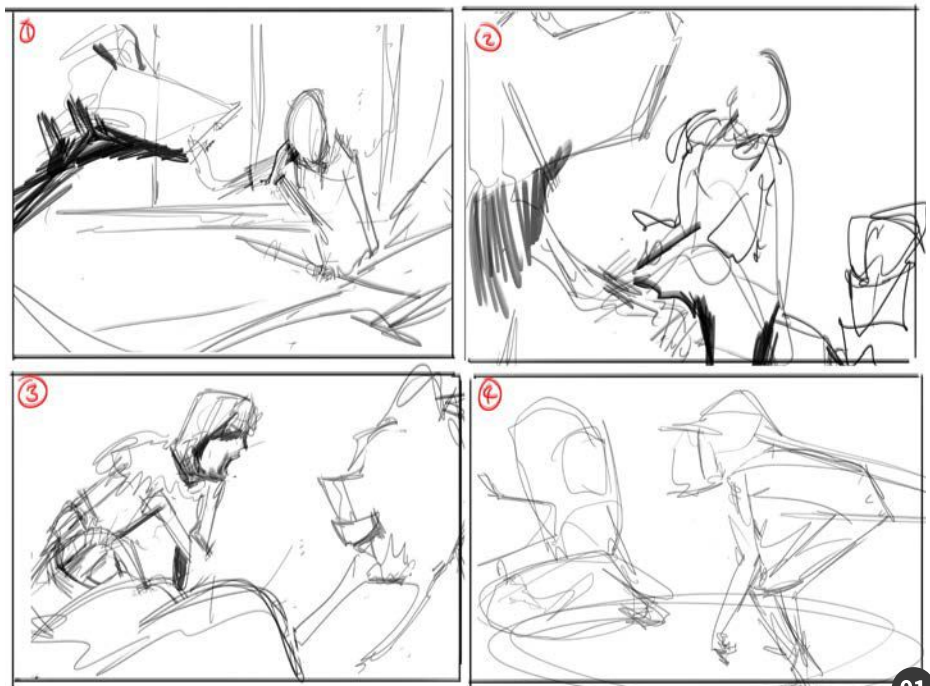
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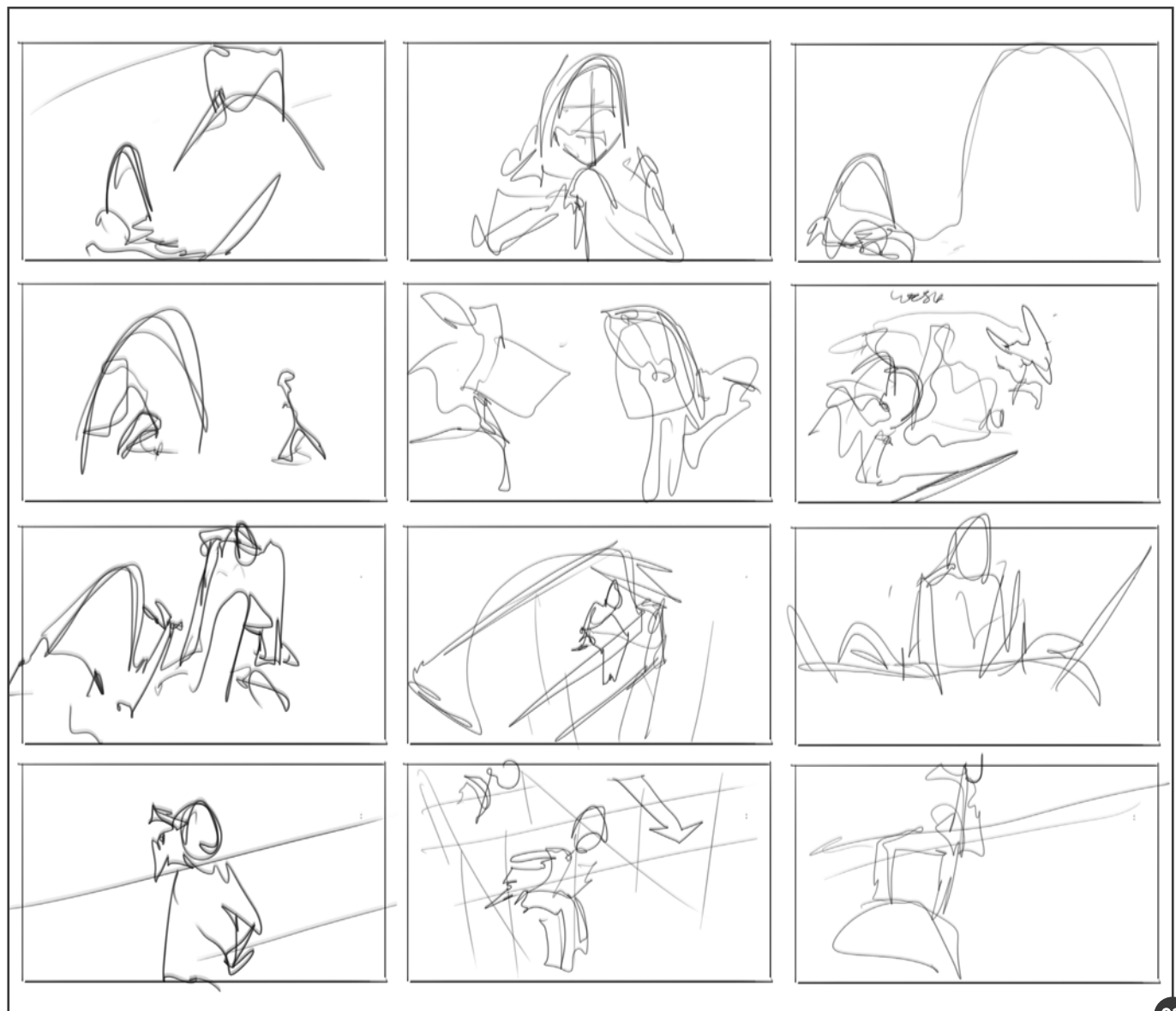
Pick up tips to perfect your digital sketches...

Whether you are sketching on a napkin or producing an academic drawing, you make thousands of choices throughout the creative process. The effect that these choices have on your work is normally reduced throughout the sketching process. As you become more invested in a piece of work – both emotionally and in terms of time – there is a tendency to become afraid of making significant changes, and ultimately you stop focusing on the big picture. For this reason, it is essential to start by looking at the big picture and think about composition and shape over anything else.

01 Thumbnailing: I start by opening a large file (4,000 × 3,000 pixels). I find the larger I work, the more responsive and



01

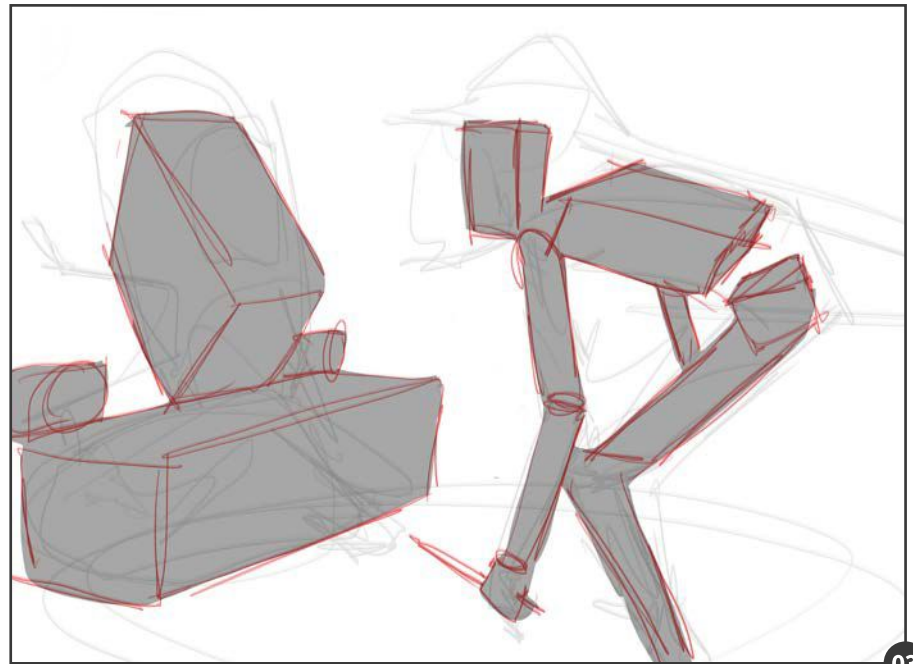


02

natural the brushes feel within the constraints of the hardware. Next, I create thumbnails for composition. This is the single most important part of the whole drawing process. The most beautiful rendering of a boring subject will evoke almost no emotional reaction. However, a genuinely interesting subject scribbled on a sticky note can make people laugh or cry.

02 Thumbnailing continued: I continue the thumbnailing process. I really cannot stress the importance of doing these enough. Think in terms of efficiency: it can take thirty seconds to draw a composition; in five minutes you will have ten options, and in ten minutes you will have twenty. I guarantee that your first idea will not be the best, or even second best, so keep trying.

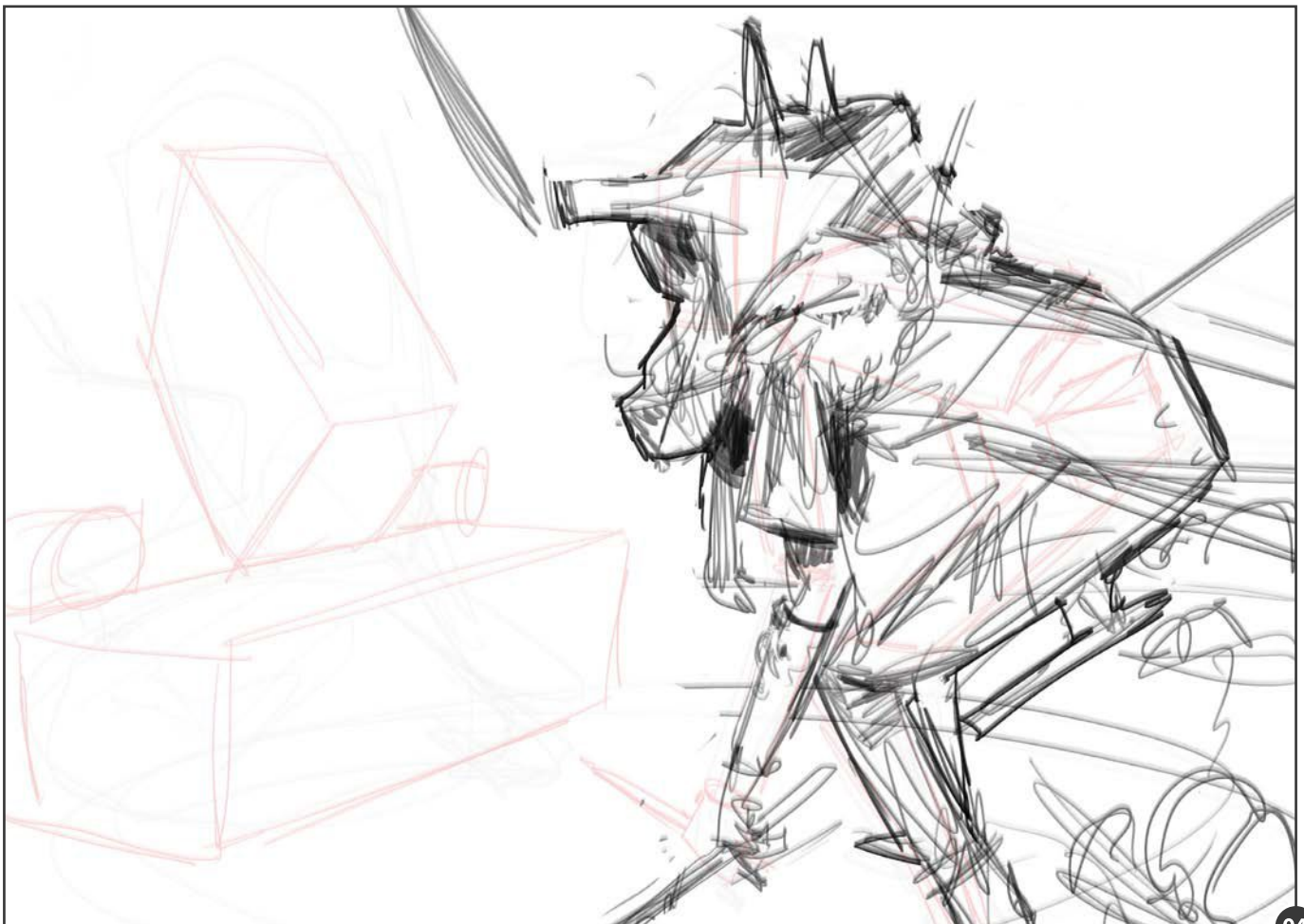
03 Blocking: Composition and shape design are very personal, and everyone has an innate appreciation of good composition. Good photography and imagery are pleasing to all audiences. It is never taught, but audiences know a well-composed image when they see it. I choose my favorite thumbnail of the



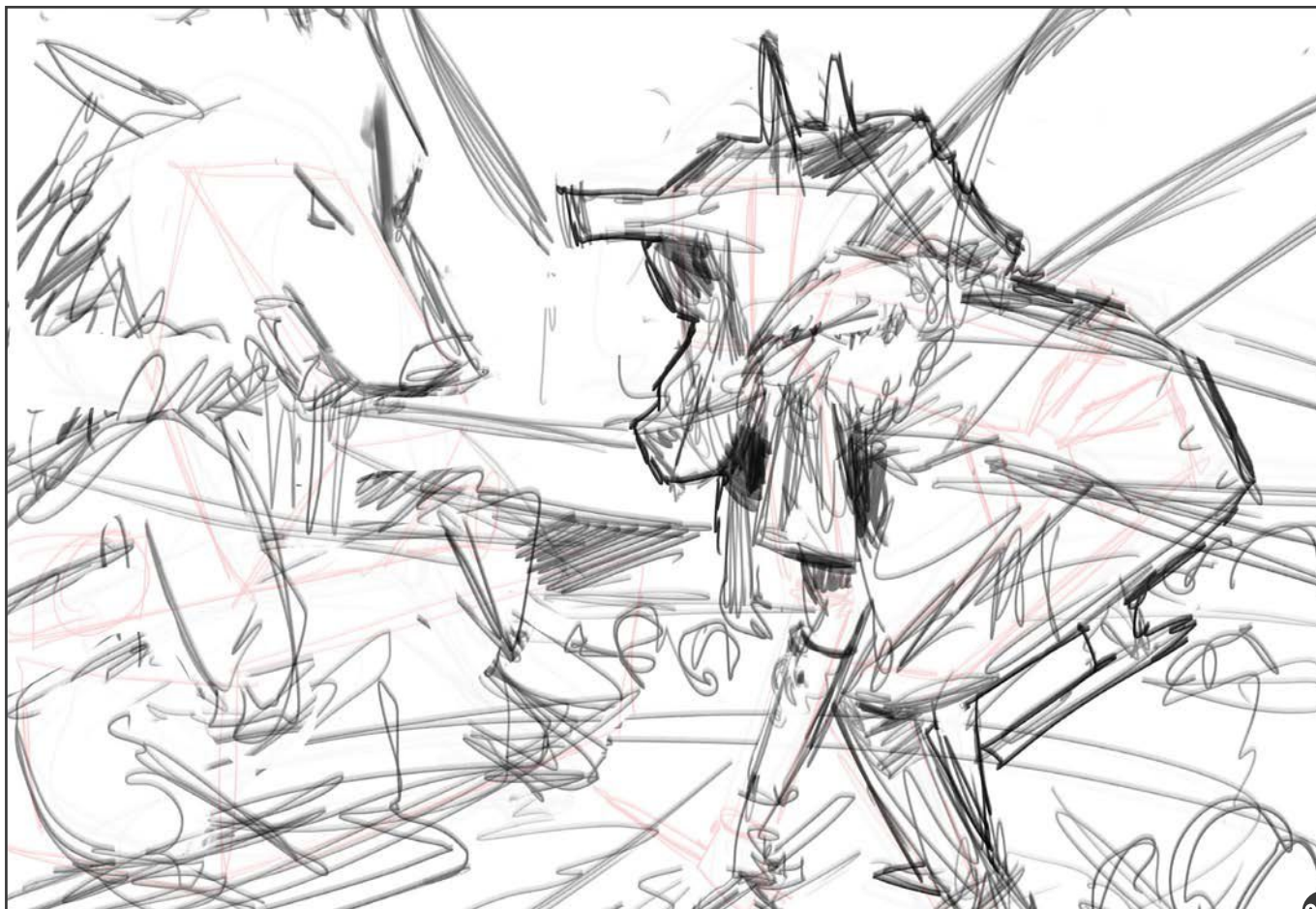
03

collection. I rarely do so few, but sometimes I find one I really like early in the process. I start to block in solid shapes to get the perspective and major forms. These major forms and their positions are important for adding details later. They are the foundations of the piece.

04 Rough start: Once the foundations are laid, and the composition has been arranged, most of the work is done. Remember, drawing is not a physical skill; what makes a good sketch interesting is the choices of the artist. How big will this figure be? How should ►



04



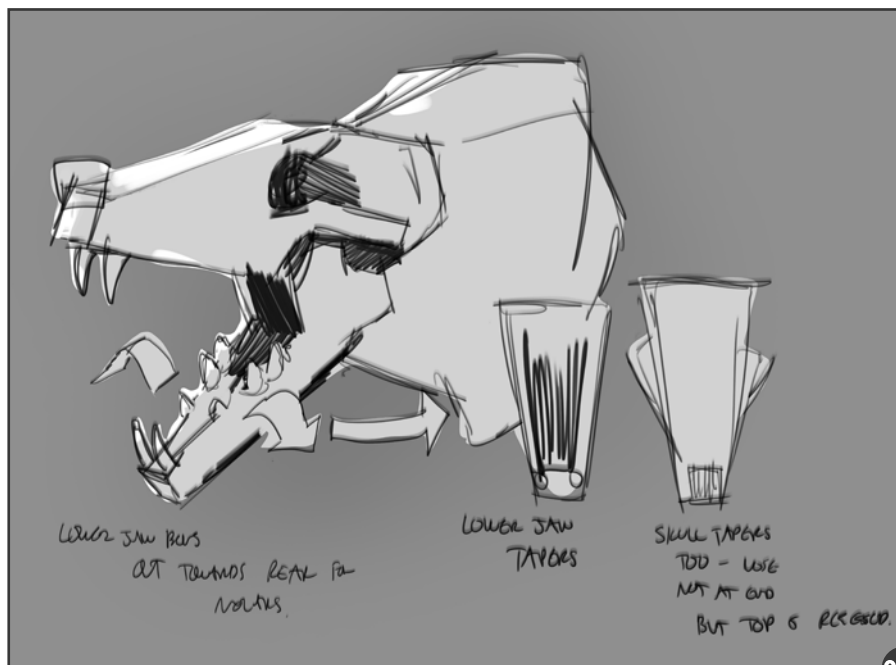
05a

this image make you feel? Often I spend an hour on a drawing and end up with a much messier outcome than this, but it will have a strong composition and that is what sells the drawing. I start to rough out the human character on top of the building blocks.

05 Roughing out continued: I continue to rough out the “undersketch,” adding the outline of the wolf and drawing some background lines to remind me that the figure is the focal point. While drawing I often leave notes for myself as this helps me stay focused; they will not remain in the finished piece. I want to understand wolf anatomy so I do a little research to learn the basic construction of a wolf’s head. Beginners tend to research musculature when encountering a new animal, rather than the skeleton. If you can block out the skeletal features accurately then you are more than halfway to a good likeness.

“Tackle the harder parts first, while your mind is still fresh”

06 Line work begins: Once the rough sketch is complete, I start to think about adding some finished lines. I drop the opacity on



05b

the rough layer to around 12%. This is so I can still see it, but not so clearly that it interferes with the neat layer above it. Everything until this stage has been about composition, so I will try not to move things around or add more elements unless it is absolutely necessary. I start with the focal point of the piece, the head of the main character. If

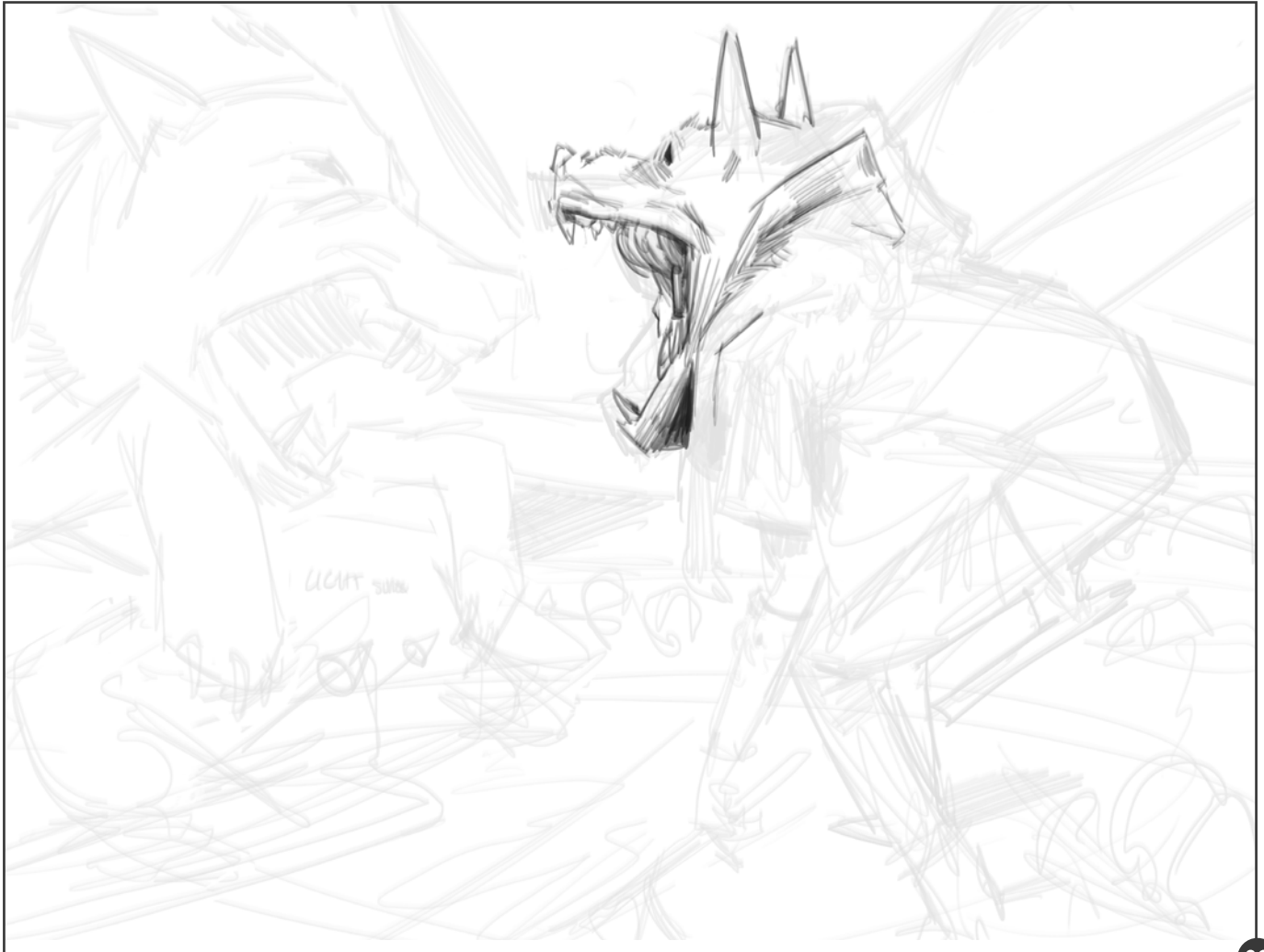
you tackle the harder parts first, while your mind is still fresh, then later on you will be able to draw the less demanding elements at leisure.

07 Lighting consideration: It is important to consider lighting early on in the drawing process – will there be a

⚡ PRO TIPS

Silhouette

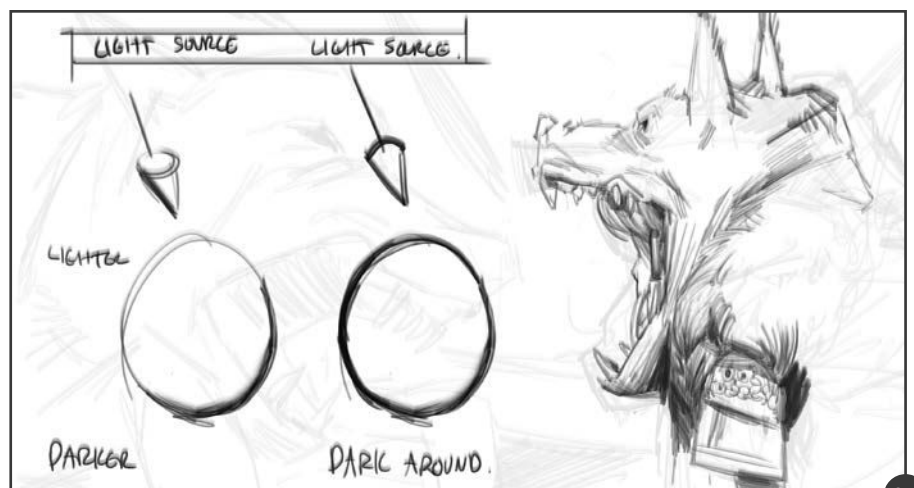
As you can see, you really do not need to have much detail, or even fur, to suggest what something is. The human brain learns the volume and form of objects very quickly; it is mostly the silhouette that tells you what you are looking at. If you learn the forms well, you will have a convincing silhouette, which you can decorate with details as much as is required or desired. Sometimes in storyboarding all you need is a simple silhouette made up of five or six lines for your brain to understand the narrative, and this will read more powerfully than a two-hour figure drawing because of a strong silhouette.



06

lot of rendering or mostly line work? I have decided to include minimal lighting, with only dark occlusions to show the shadow sections, and almost no halftone. Over-rendering may confuse the clarity of the line work.

Identifying bad habits is equally important to learning as developing good habits. The balls in image 07 show the difference between careful and lazy line work. One has varying darkness and thickness, and suggests light from above. The other is dark all around, and appears unlit. ►



07



08

08 Half-lock: I suggest a general light direction by including a couple of dark occlusion shadows. I also draw a half-lock fold around the knees – this is what happens when you compress one side of a tube (such as a leg or arm). The middle will sink into itself and obscure some of the material. Often people line up the folds alongside each other, when in the real world they actually overlap. Do not be afraid to have folds overlapping and obscuring other sections. It is worth spending time researching and practicing drapery because poorly drawn folds and creases can be the difference between an okay sketch and an excellent one.

09 Arrows: Composition is the key to good image making. I continue the figure and also add a fallen tree branch. I want to add a background element so I ask myself “How can I make this help the focal point and not draw attention away from it?” First, our eyes are drawn to details and so details should therefore be reserved for areas of high interest (focal points). Second, the object can “lead” the



09

eye towards the focal point – adding a simple diagonal draws the eye in towards the center. The character's left leg and the wolf's head also intentionally point in towards the character.

“Five minutes spent refining the outer shape of the objects is worth more than hours of rendering”

10 Silhouette: After adding more drapery to the figure I start to focus on the wolf. I change the stance to look more defensive and decide it could be protecting something, which suggests aggression from the human figure. Try to think about how you can add narrative to your images. Viewers want stories, not just nicely rendered objects. As you can see, the leg silhouette has been drawn, and that is all you need to make something “read” in your brain as a 3D volume. Always, always, focus on your silhouettes. Five minutes spent refining the outer shape of the objects is worth more than hours of rendering.

11 Detail: Details are just not that important to the strength of an image. I add quite a lot of detail to the wolf's face and fur. Ultimately though, it still reads as the same thing – it is a wolf snarling. It looks a little “prettier” but it is not necessarily more emotionally powerful. The best drawings have a very quick “read” – you understand what they are showing at a glance. If your eyes have to pause to understand what is happening then the details are detracting from the strength of the image. For images with instant read and minimal detail, look no further than cartoons and animations.

12 How dark?: Bold shadows look confident. The only problem is that these near-black cast shadows do not occur in real life. It is rare that you will see a cast shadow that is black because of the presence of ambient light. Occlusion shadows will usually be darker, because this is where ambient light cannot enter.

The black swatch in image 12 demonstrates the value difference: my lines look lighter by comparison, even in the shadows. “Airy” shadows are not only more natural, they also add a more traditional feel, as often it is a struggle to achieve pure black line work with traditional mediums. ►



10



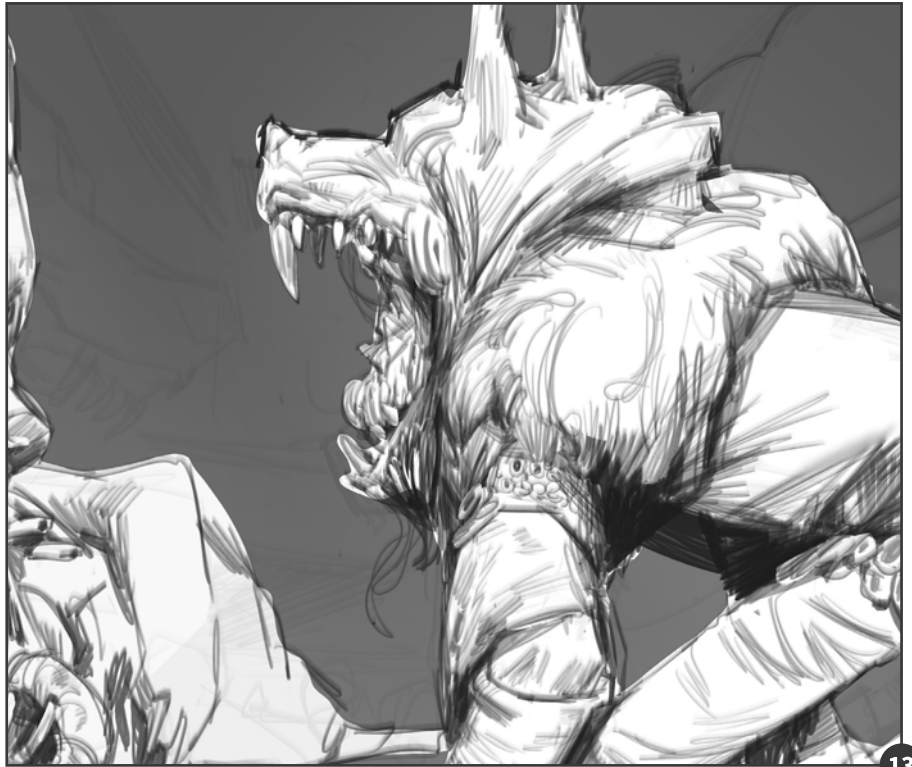
11



12

13 Fill layer: I add a white layer behind the figures and then a darker layer behind that. This allows me to check the silhouettes. I ask myself questions such as: “Do they read quickly?” “Is it clear which objects are behind and which are in front?” “Is there an obvious focal point?” I am reasonably happy with these silhouettes, but I notice that the man’s right hand does not look natural, so it has to be erased. I always continue to check silhouettes throughout as it helps me to save time in the future.

14 Drop shadow: I am near the end of the drawing now so I add soft drop shadows around my main focal points within the image. This helps to separate these elements and clarify their silhouettes. I add a little more tone below the wolf and the man to suggest a slight shadow on the ground. I do not need to be heavy with this shadow, as the viewer’s eyes are extremely sensitive to changes in value between black and white.



13

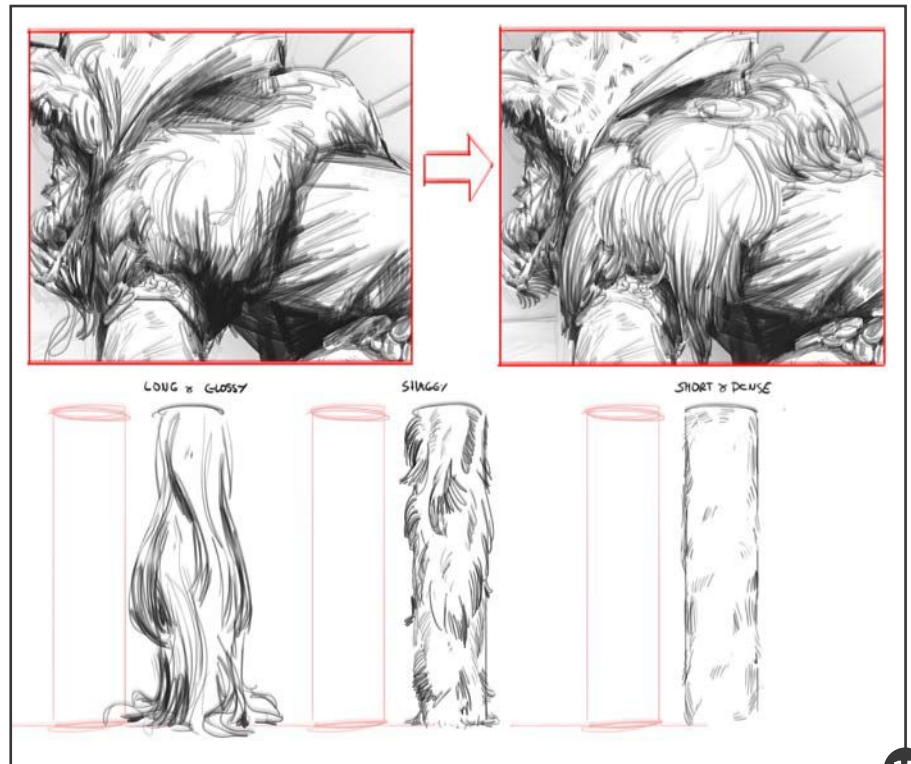


14

15 Material: I now go back to clarify and add variety to the types of material throughout the image. Showing a variety of materials helps to clarify the shapes where objects overlap, and is also more pleasing to the eye. The three tubes in image 15 show how simple it is to suggest different lengths of fur. Rendering hair does not need to be time consuming, and often less is more.

16 The danger of overworking: I could continue drawing but the danger is that I will overwork the sketch and end up destroying any good line quality I have worked hard to achieve. Often the hardest part of a drawing is knowing when to stop. I regularly find myself thinking "I should have stopped twenty minutes ago," and I have now reached that point! When this happens I take a break for an hour or so and come back to the piece with fresh eyes and a new outlook. I can see that I need to erase some of the dirtier marks and redraw them with clearer lines.

17 Final piece: For the final image, I remove the bolder outlines and simplify the line work. This stage can often feel like I am going backwards rather than making progress. However, the opposite is true because I am adding fresh line work back into the drawing and erasing the overworked areas where I sketched without carefully considering the lines. Think back to those balls from image 07 and remember that any form with a bold line the whole way around will cancel out any suggested lighting. With these final few adjustments the piece is finished. ●



15



16



The Artist



Tom Fox
tomfoxart.com



Art Gallery

Each issue the 2dartist team selects the best digital images from around the world. Enjoy!



Submit your images! Simply email annie@3dtotal.com



Broodmother

Ferdinand D. Ladera

Year created: 2016

Web: ferdinandladera.deviantart.com

© Ferdinand Ladera

Illustrated by Ferdinand D. Ladera



In the red canyon

Ruxing Gao

Year created: 2016

Web: artstation.com/artist/gaoruxing

© Ruxing Gao



scientist

Tatyana Latypova

Year created: 2016

Web: artstation.com/artist/CG-sister

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We found them, boss

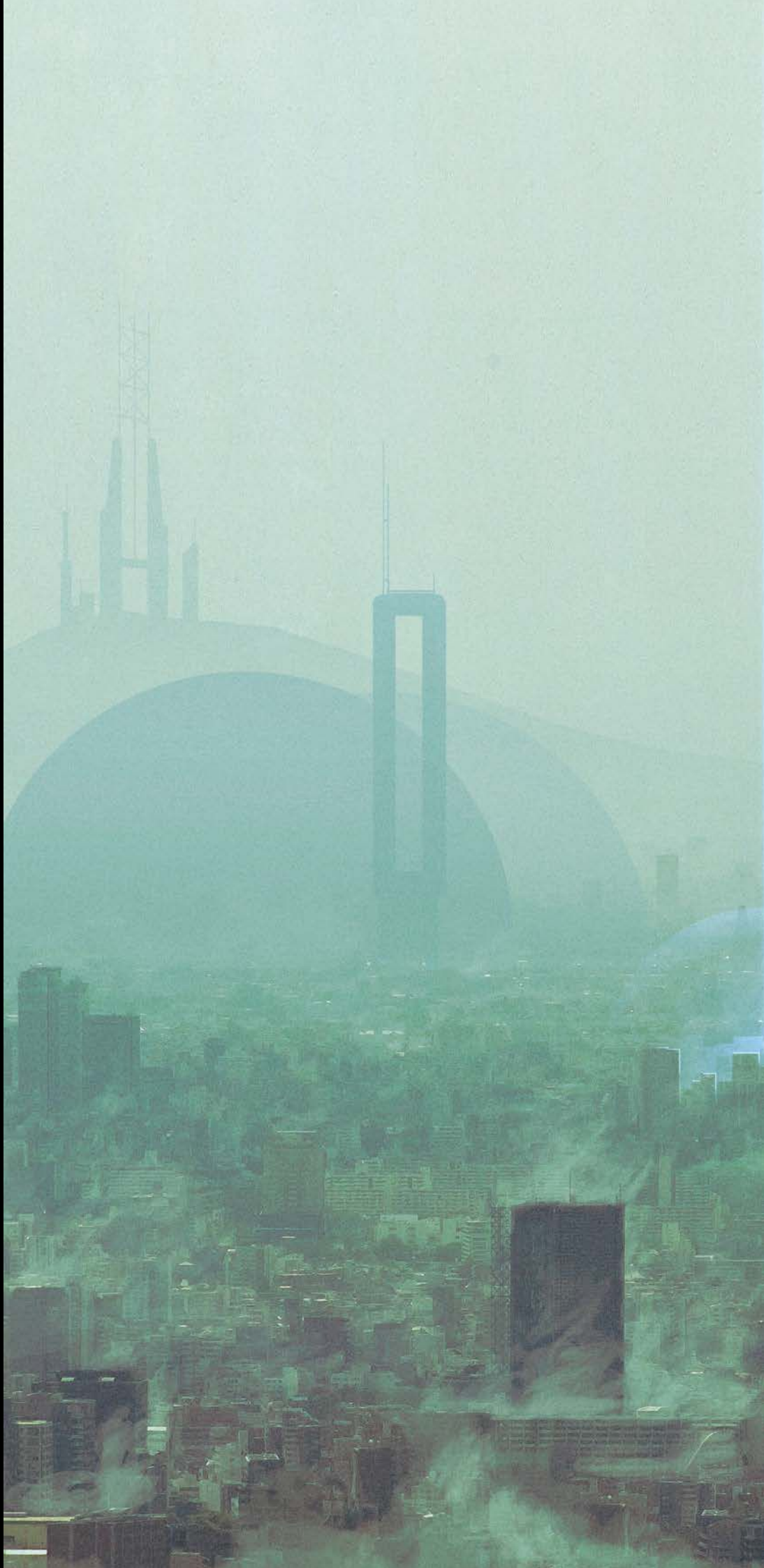
Simon Gocal

Year created: 2016

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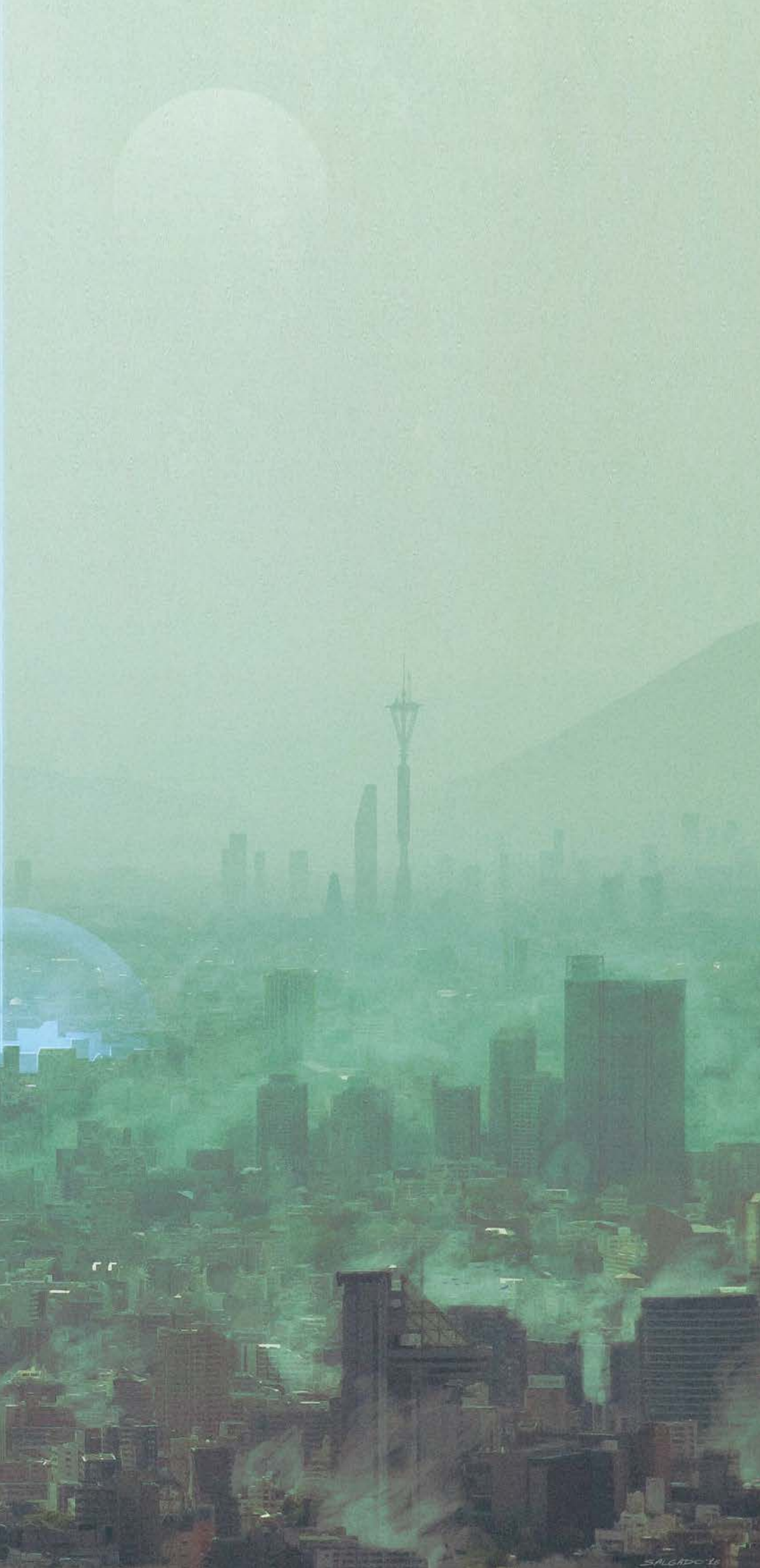
Intervention

Carlos Salgado

Year created: 2016

Web: artstation.com/artist/carlos-salgado

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Brilliance

Ilse Gort

Year created: 2016

Web: ilsegort.artworkfolio.com

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Watch your step

Marko Drazic

Year created: 2016

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vampire queen

Giorgio Baroni

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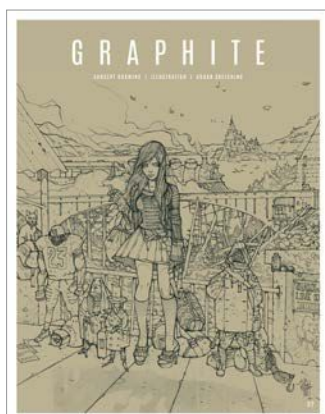
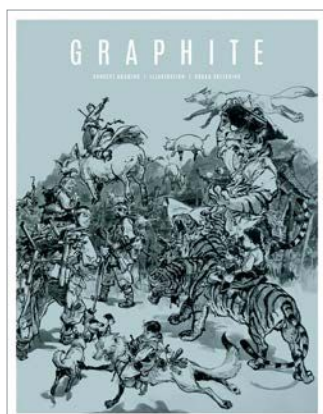
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G. BARONI

GRAPHITE

GRAPHITE is a quarterly publication featuring inspirational artwork, interviews, and tutorials on drawing, sketching, and illustration. Each issue features content by an eclectic mix of industry professionals and talented newcomers, including illustrators, urban sketchers, concept designers, and comic artists. GRAPHITE's focus on traditional media, elegant presentation, and in-depth resources makes it a timelessly valuable addition to any art lover's shelf.

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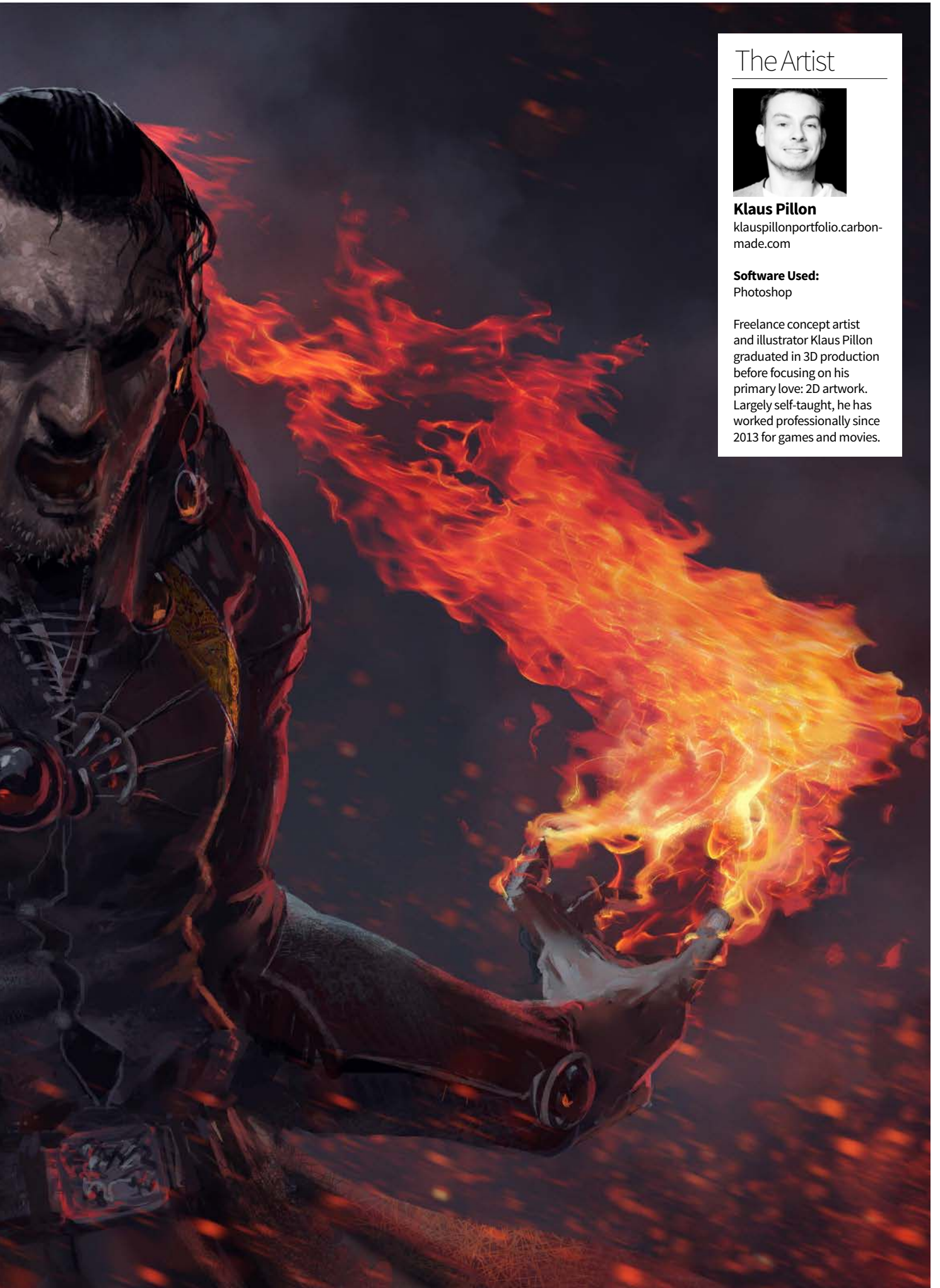
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Speed painting magic effects: fire magic

Concept artist Klaus Pillon teaches you how to use photobashing to put together a cinematic magic fantasy of a fire wielding mage [▶](#)



The Artist



Klaus Pillon

klauspillonportfolio.carbon-made.com

Software Used:

Photoshop

Freelance concept artist and illustrator Klaus Pillon graduated in 3D production before focusing on his primary love: 2D artwork. Largely self-taught, he has worked professionally since 2013 for games and movies.

Learn how to create a fiery fantasy scene...

In this tutorial I will show you how to create a mage performing fire magic that has a cinematic feeling using only Photoshop tools and a couple of textures. You will see how to think about a composition depending on how simple the scene is and which elements you can use to make it look interesting during the thumbnailing and sketching stage. You will see one of the methods I use to go from a black and white sketch to a fully colored image, and how to think about color schemes you can use based on the elements you have. We will also look at how and when to use photo textures and play with the different functionalities of the software, while also leaving room for you to explore your own methods.

I will talk a little about designing with abstract shapes that can create rhythm within your designs, be it for a costume or the whole composition. As the focus of this tutorial is the fire magic, we will also discuss the importance of light, how to think about it like a photographer, how it works and interacts with different materials, and finally how to use them to make an interesting design based on your lighting scheme. Finally, I will share some of the tips and tricks I use in my daily concept art production.

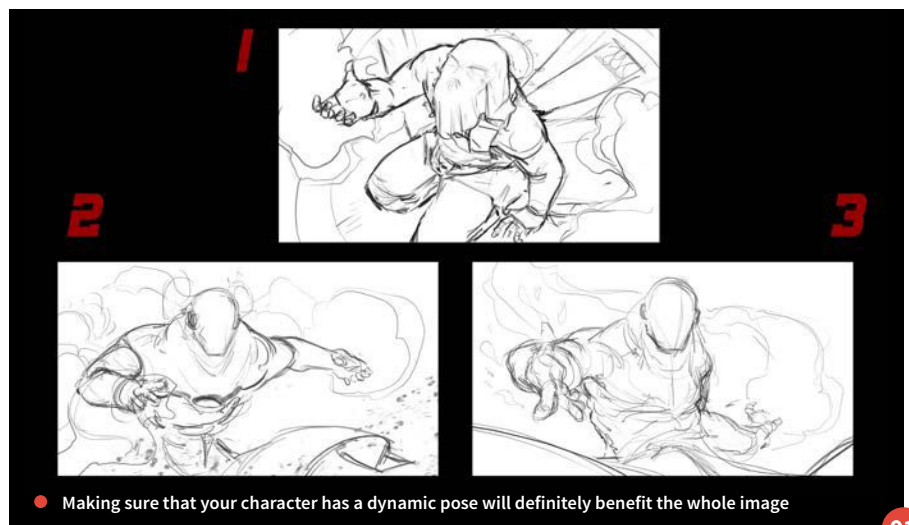
01 Line sketches: Let's start by doing some research. I recommend you look for a few references of dynamic poses for the mage, and also gather some ideas for putting the scene together. As the image is of a mage performing fire magic I suggest you focus on the pose of the character – try to keep it simple but dynamic. I find it helps to think of the image as a keyframe from a movie to get a cinematic feel to my work.

I prefer to start with line work when working with characters, it allows me to quickly sketch in the poses. At this stage it isn't necessary for you to worry about the face or adding details as you want to work out possible compositions and lighting first. You can try out several

different camera angles and poses, work on the ideas you researched earlier, and also try to think outside of the box come up with an interesting and engaging composition.

02 Value sketches: When you have done several line sketches you can further explore the composition through lighting setups. Try asking yourself how you would light the scene to make the mage interesting, but also make sure the fire magic is the focus of the whole image.

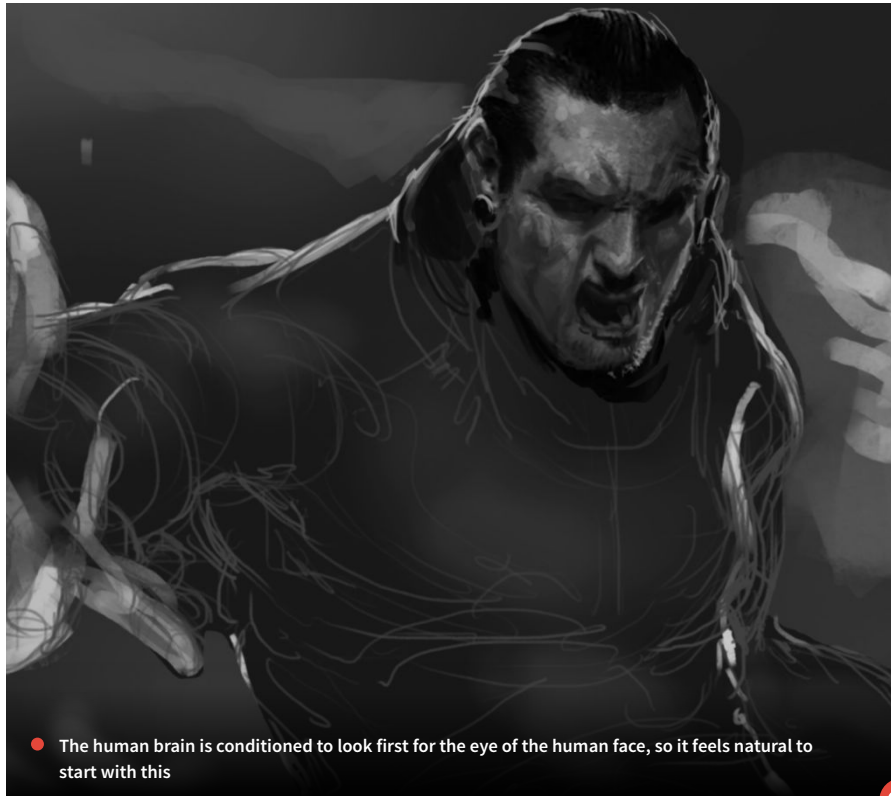
To find interesting lighting compositions you can play around with the positive and negative spaces within the image – fire is a fun element to work with because of all the lighting possibilities.



To add values to your line sketches you need to switch to Multiply Mode (Layer > Layer Style > Blending Options > Multiply) and create a few new layers below the line work (Shift+Ctrl+N); on these new layers you can paint in the values. Another option you could light the scene with is to create a very dark layer underneath the line work – this makes the lines lighter and makes for an interesting lighting option. Using

this lighting technique allows you to place the lights to get the most impact. Before you move on to adding the details you should try to add some rhythm and movement by playing with the fire masses. Use the fire to draw the viewer's eye around the image.

03 Cutting and face: Now you need to pick one of the sketches to continue



● The human brain is conditioned to look first for the eye of the human face, so it feels natural to start with this

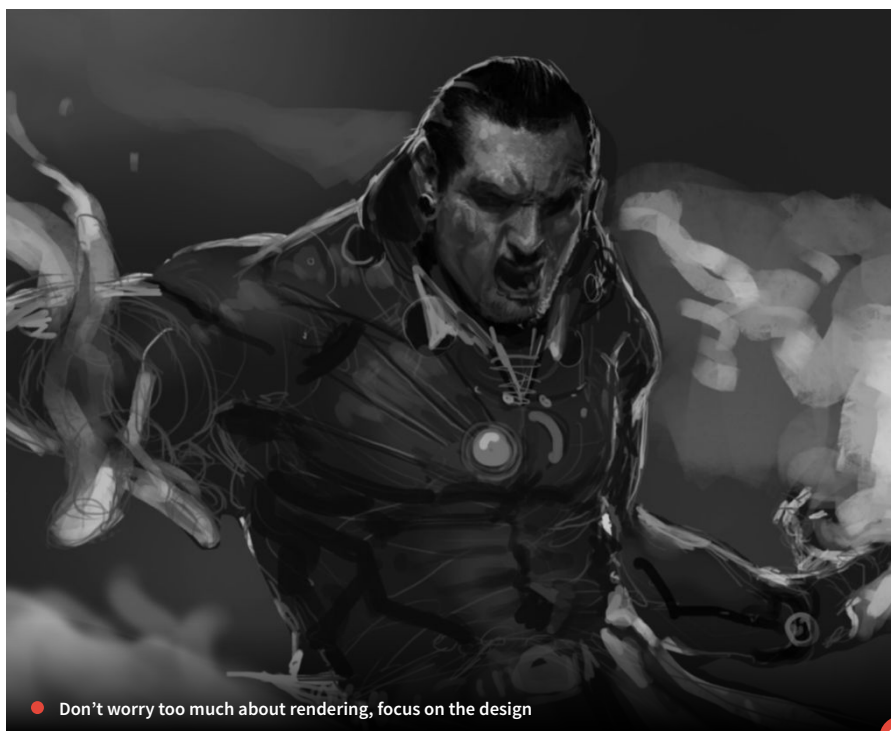
03

working on. I picked the third of my sketches, although it is quite generic it is a good choice because it has a strong pose, interesting composition, and gives the fire a prominent place. Start by separating the elements of the image on to separate layers; these should include the fire in the foreground, the mage, the remaining fire, and the background. Doing this now will give you more flexibility in later stages.

Once you have separated all the elements you can start developing the details; as the composition is quite simple in terms of elements the viewer's eye will be drawn to the mage's face, so you should start there. As this is a speed painting you can use time saving techniques because you are only creating a concept rather than a polished final image. A great time saving technique is to photobash details into your painting; here you can save a lot of time and effort by using a photograph for the mage's face. This way you will bring some realism (a photo will already have a skin texture!) to your concept as well as save yourself from having to accurately paint a face. Place your chosen face on to the layer above the character layer; you can use the Warp tool (Choose Edit > Transform > Warp) or the Free Transform tool (Ctrl+T) to deform the photo to fit the pose and mood of the character. Remember that we are working on a value sketch at the moment so you will need to desaturate a color photograph (Shift+Ctrl+U).

04 Designing the costume: When you are happy with the face you can start to bring in some details and design directions to the mage's costume. Continue to work in black and white so you don't have to worry about color, as well as creating eye-catching clothing. While you are working on the costume you still need to think about the lighting and cinematic look of the finished piece. Think about where to place light elements to make the most impact, as well as what materials you want to use; you should also think about ways to make the costume (and therefore the whole image) more believable. It is very important that you understand how different materials react to light, and good references will go a long way to helping you. I want my character to have a 19th-Century look, so I will use leather for the jacket, and some metal and gem ornaments to show his status as a mage – who I imagine to be quite wealthy. Keep it simple and loose at the moment and just focus on the main shapes of your design as well as the lighting. ►

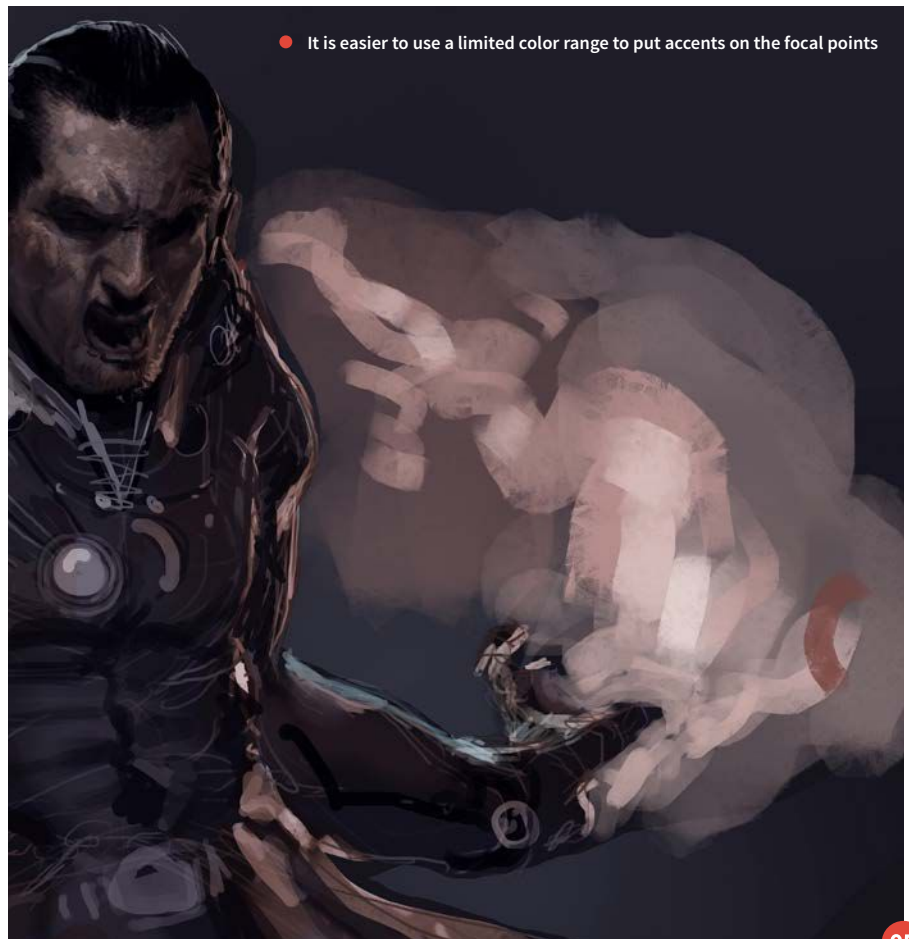
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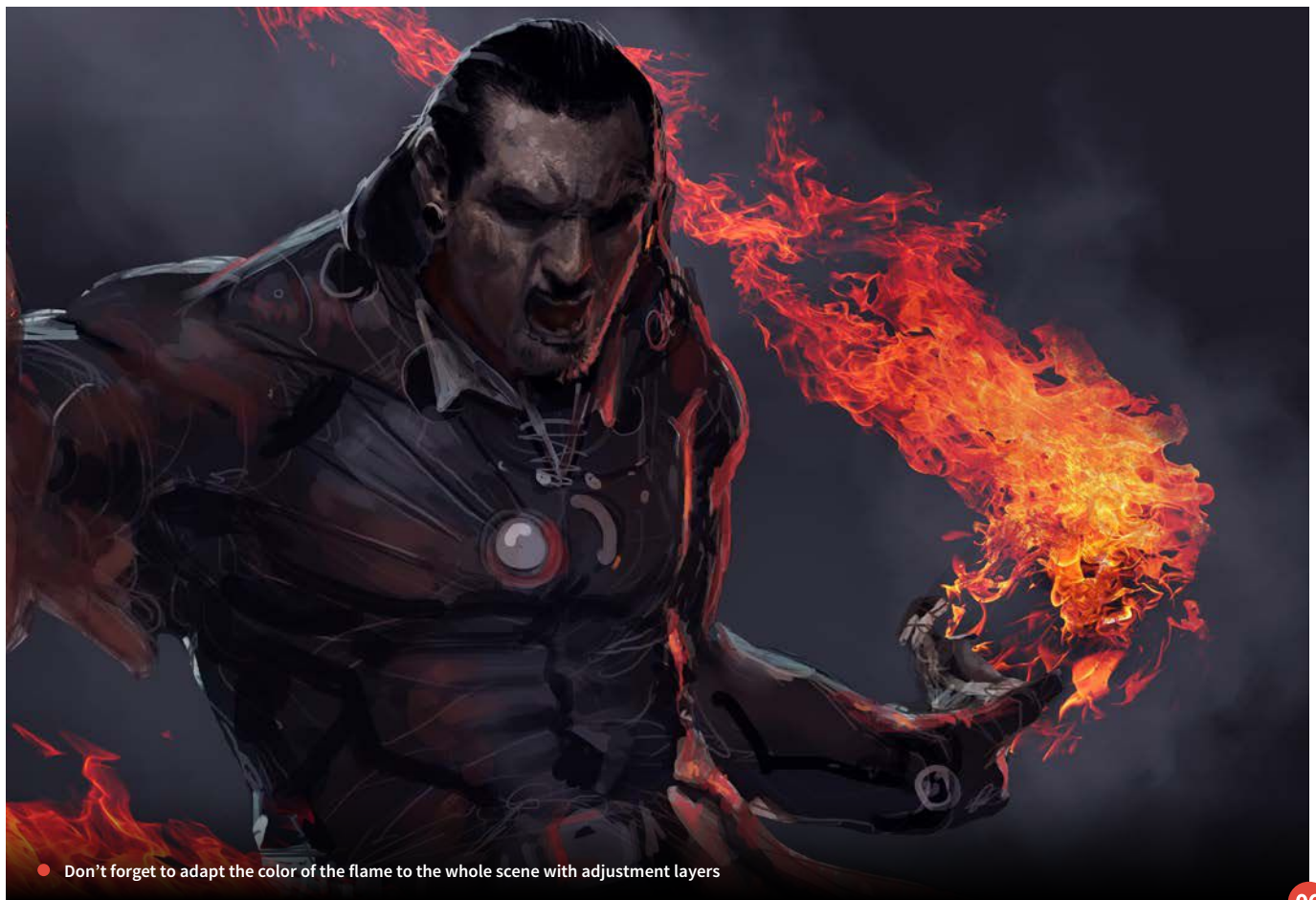
● Don't worry too much about rendering, focus on the design

05 Coloring the sketch: Now it is time to give your sketch some color before moving on to the rendering stage. For this you should start with the background layer and use a color balance adjustment layer (Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Color Balance) to play with the colors until you find something you like. You will probably want to go with a dark purple hue which will help the reds of the fire magic effect to pop; however, you don't want it to be too saturated as it will draw attention away from the focus. If you find you do have an over saturated background you can always adjust it (Enhance > Adjust Color > Adjust Hue/Saturation) to bring it down a notch. I find that coloring the background first helps me to color the character, as he will draw most of his color from the environment and ambient lighting.

To color the mage start with a color balance adjustment layer set as a clipping mask (hold Alt while placing the mouse between the layers) so it will only affect the character layer. Then continue with a couple of clipping mask layers set to Overlay (Layer > Layer Style > Blending Options > Overlay) to give the background color more richness, as well as changing the skin tones a bit,



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adding red to the deep shadows and flames, and a touch of blue for rim lighting. As before keep it loose and rough because you will be adding some more color later on with opaque paint.

06 Adding the flames: Find some photo references and textures of fire and flames, there are some really great websites that have lots of free textures. The idea of using textures here is to attain a level of realism quickly that would normally take a long time to paint by hand, especially with something as tricky as fire. Make the sketch fire layer invisible; don't delete it as you may still need to go back to it when adding the textures. Play around with your references and textures, transform and warp them to fit the scene. If your fire textures are on a black background you will need to set the layer to lighten blending mode which will only be visible when the values of this layer are lighter than the ones underneath. When you are happy with the rough placement of the fire, use the Eyedropper tool (I) to color pick some of the reds, and paint it on to the character's highlights as well as some of the shaded areas. This really helps to integrate the character into the scene.

“You don't want the costume to attract too much of the viewer's attention so you should try to keep most of it within the same value range and use the gems and other ornaments to add richness and interest to the design”

07 Refining the character: Now that almost all of the elements are in place you can start to refine the character, starting with the area around his face because this is where the viewer's eye will be drawn. This is also the area you want to have some interesting details and designs. One of the key ways to represent realistic fire is to also think about how the fire lights the

rest of the scene, so it is important to always be thinking about where the light is coming from and how it is reflected on the different materials.

For example, I add some red around the gems on the mage's clothing because even though they're quite dark and don't really interfere with the rest of the character; they are highly polished and will reflect the flames to create some interesting highlights.

You don't want the costume to attract too much of the viewer's attention so you should try to keep most of it within the same value range, and use the gems and other ornaments to add richness and interest to the design. This will also help to unify the character with the rest of the image. ▶

⚡ PRO TIPS Using references

Don't forget to use references; this is a critical step towards better and more believable designs and concepts. While doing your research you might stumble upon something you didn't expect, and that in turn might lead to new and interesting ideas. It will also help you to create your own visual library and open your understanding of many things, which is a very valuable skill in concept art. On the other hand also keep in mind that in the end only you have the control over your image, try not to become limited by your references.

● You don't need to render everything; let the viewer's mind fill in the blanks



07

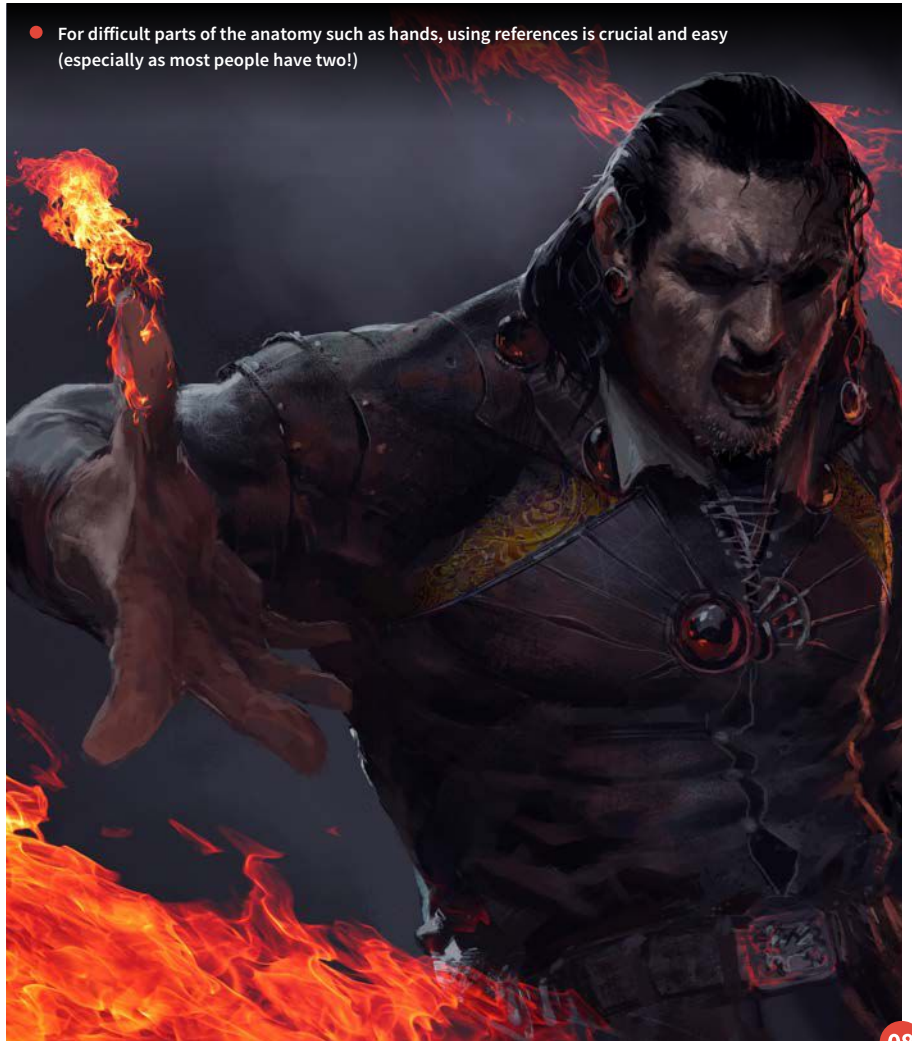
08 Finalizing the character: Once you are done with the mage's face you can move on to finishing the rest of the painting. For the hand at the front you can either take a photo of your own hand or use a mirror as reference – this is a great shortcut because you will get the exact pose you need.

This is quite a dark scene and apart from the fire and rim lights, there isn't a lot of light, therefore most of the image won't be highly detailed. You should only add details in the areas that would be lit by the fire. This gives the viewer's eyes places to rest and will draw them to the focal points (the face and flames). As the flames are a key focal point you don't want to over detail the character and in turn clutter up the final image.

You need to be careful when adding highlights that are created by fire because they shouldn't really be bright like highlights created by light bulbs or the sun. A highly saturated red will work better than a bright one, especially with dark materials such as the mage's leather jacket.

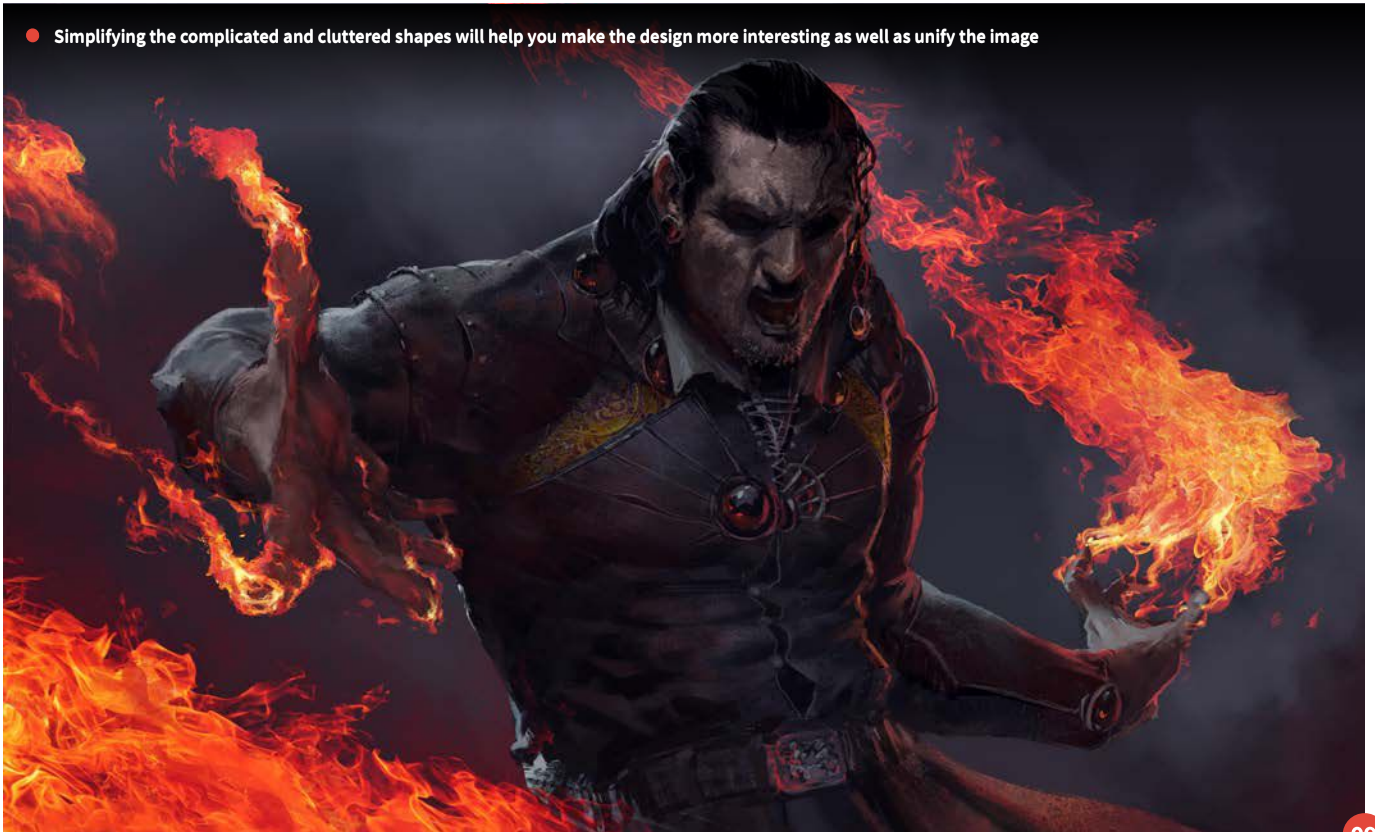
09 Working the fire effect: Now it is time to work on the fire effect; even though this is a fantasy scene with magic you should still try to keep it based and grounded in the real world. A quick research session will help you

- For difficult parts of the anatomy such as hands, using references is crucial and easy (especially as most people have two!)



08

- Simplifying the complicated and cluttered shapes will help you make the design more interesting as well as unify the image



09

find suitable references and create the desired effect. We are aiming to create fireproof skin and the effect of an inflammable gas being released from his pores that the mage can control.

You want to add flames that appear to skim the surface of his skin. To do this work on a new layer above mage layer and pick colors from the flame references to paint flames around his fingers. Experiment with different brushes and textures to get a realistic feel and look to the flames.

As the flame textures you added in step 06 are very detailed and defined, you should paint over some of fire to reduce the level of detail and unify the image.

If you feel that painting the effect doesn't look as good as you want it to, you can always use a combination of painting and textures, and play with the layer's blending modes to get a good balance of realism and fantasy.

10 **Final effects and touches:** All the elements are finished yet the picture lacks something, and that is more effects! To make the whole image come together and look more interesting you should vary the size

and shape of the effects. On a new layer use a dotted brush to create sparks – this will not only add depth and detail to your painting, but also bring together the separate areas of fire.

To create variation in the values and hues of the sparks use the Inner Glow Layer Style option (Layer > Layer Style > Blending Options and tick Inner Glow) this will add a glow that will emanate from the inside edges of the sparks. After that simply duplicate all the fire layers on top, hiding the one underneath to

get a copy, and apply a directional blur filter (Filters > Blurs) to them. With a Layer Mask you can mask the parts that you don't want to be blurred, such as the base of the flames.

On top of the background layer paint some smoke with a smoke brush around the fire. With lighter and blue values as the smoke moves up the picture, this will help the character to pop out more. With these final touches you are finished. ●

⚡ PRO TIPS

You don't need to paint everything

This is especially true within the concept art industry, if you want to get a realistic result in a short time then there is no shame in using photo textures as a short cut because to paint all of it by hand will take too long. If you take the time to practice and learn when and where to use textures you will develop a very powerful time saving skill.

Experimentation

It is a great feeling when you create a nice effect (almost by accident) after trying and mixing different Photoshop tools and techniques. This is the kind of knowledge that you will develop only by experimenting and exploring the software (but it also applies to anything that needs practice), especially with a software as powerful as Photoshop – the possibilities are endless.

● Think about all the components of the effect you are rendering, the more the better



10



The Artist



Klaus Pillon

klauspillonportfolio.carbon-
made.com





Pavel Kolomeyets

artstation.com/artist/pav327

Software Used:
Photoshop

Pavel Kolomeyets is a freelance concept artist and illustrator from Pavlodar, Kazakhstan. He creates vibrant, ethereal sci-fi and fantasy artworks featuring warriors, monsters and special effects.

Beginner's guide to digital painting in Photoshop:
Sci-fi and Fantasy

Sci-fi and fantasy quick tips: smoke trails

Pavel Kolomeyets shows how to quickly and easily create a smoke trail in the sky ▶

Enhance your scene with believable streams of smoke...

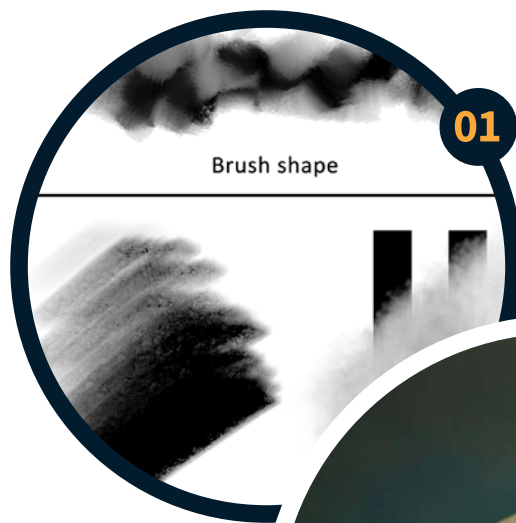
01 Set up your tools: Set your brush as follows: Opacity 100%; Flow 30–60%; turn Transfer on; and turn Texture on with Color Dodge mode. We will also use the Smudge tool with a default chalk brush, with Scattering turned on, Angle Jitter (in Shape Dynamics) set to 100%, Transfer turned on, and Strength at 20–30%.

02 Start: Now that we have dealt with our tools, we can paint a smoke or condensation trail in the sky. This is a line that dissipates as it goes further from its source. Let's start by making a confident paint stroke.

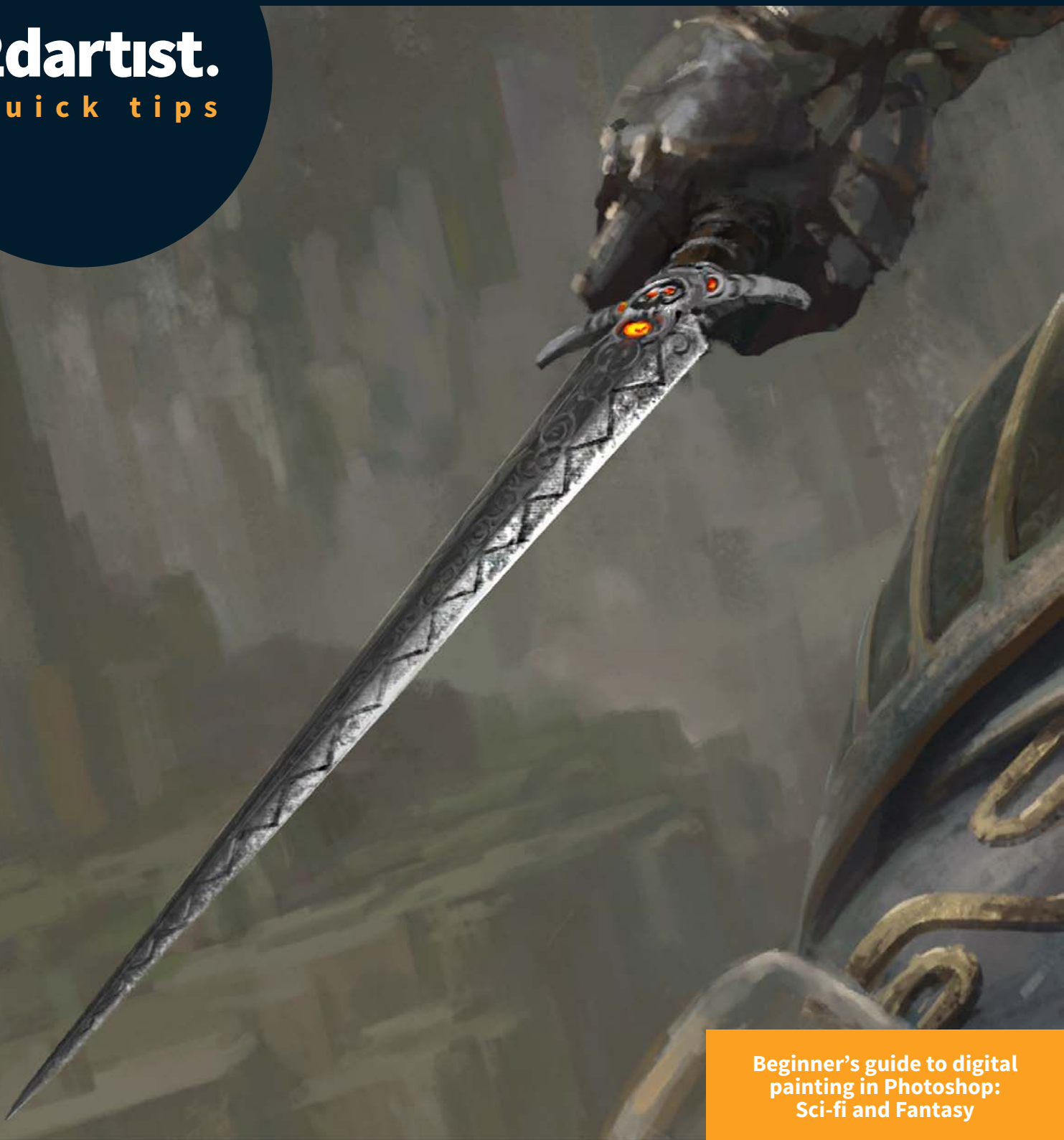
03 Transform the shape: Free Transform (Ctrl+T) the shape and squeeze the transformation box (Ctrl+click+drag) by moving one corner. It is a quick way to add an impression of perspective and movement. The trail already looks more concentrated and dense at one end, naturally creating a sense of direction.

04 Break up the trail: Add a slight turbulence effect with the Smudge tool. This breaks up the shape of the trail without losing the continuous line. Add a layer mask (Layer > Layer Mask) and thin out some parts on the trail. Black color will hide the layer and white will reveal it.

05 Add satellite trails: Make copies (Ctrl+J) of the trail and transform the duplicates to create smaller satellite trails to go alongside the main trail. Use the layer mask to give the duplicates a different look. Then tone down the copies a bit with the Burn tool (hand-shaped icon on the Tools panel).



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Beginner's guide to digital
painting in Photoshop:
Sci-fi and Fantasy

Sci-fi and fantasy quick tips: daggers

Paint a decorated dagger in minutes with Pavel Kolomeyets' quick guide ▶

Use Photoshop settings to quickly illustrate a fantasy weapon...

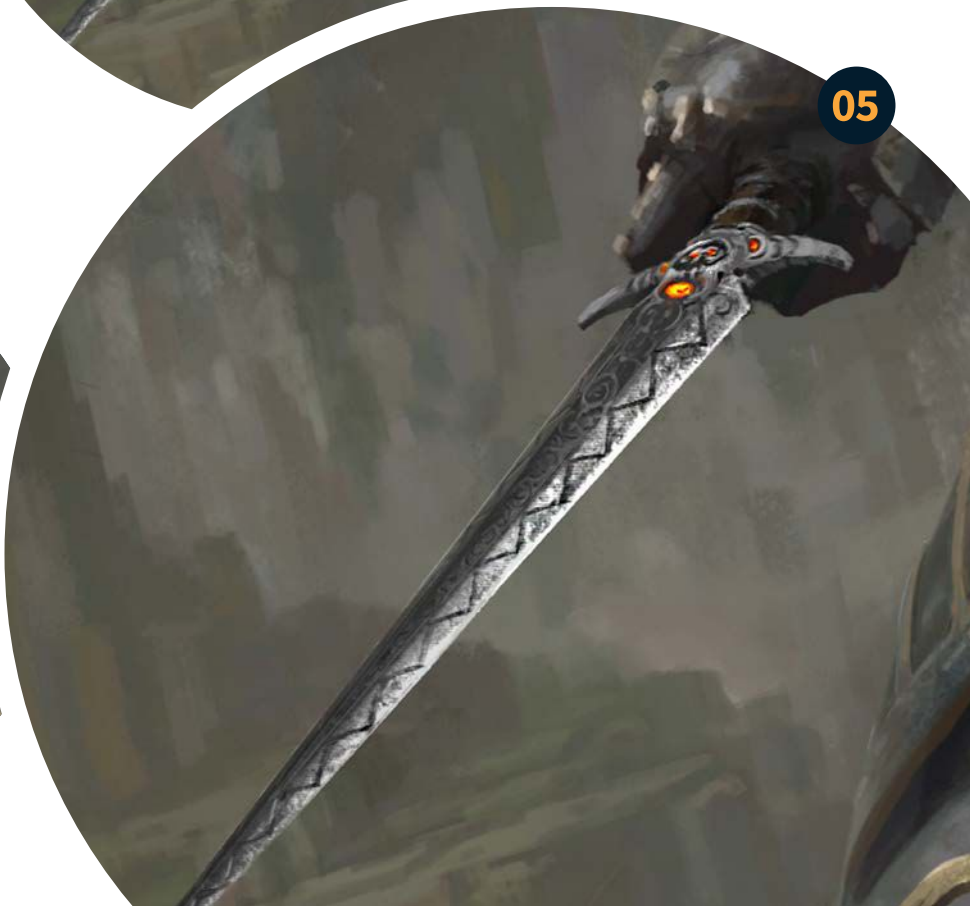
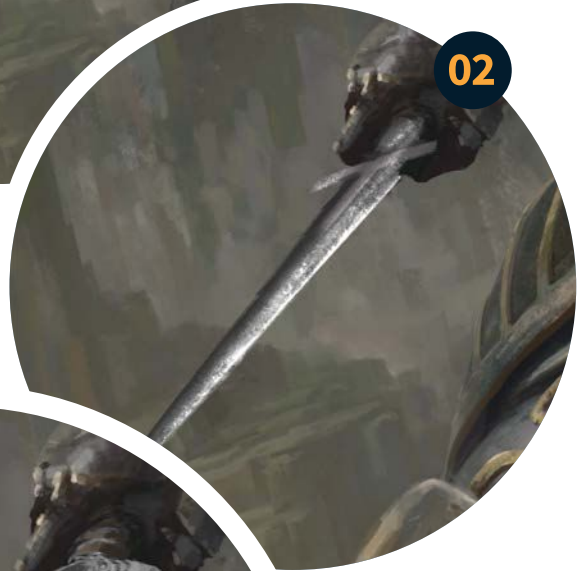
01 Block in: Daggers are short single- or double-edged blades with straight or curved sharp pointed ends. Block in the initial shape with your preferred brush. Focus on the dagger's form and how it fits within the space, perspective, and nearby objects.

02 Light and metallic material: Use "Lock transparent pixels" and a default chalk brush in Color Dodge mode with Texture and Transfer turned on in the Brush panel. Pick a light gray color and set the Flow to 10–25%, making light strokes on the blade to accentuate the edge.

03 Add details: Paint major details with a default chalk brush with Texture (in Color Dodge mode) and Transfer (set to Flow) selected. Reference real daggers for suitable details. Even if you are making something that never existed, having a reference will help you make an informed, believable design.

04 Use the Sharpen tool: I use the Sharpen tool (triangular shape on the Tools menu) on rough metallic surfaces. It increases the texture and tricks viewers into perceiving more detail than there actually is. Do not go too crazy with it, because it creates artifacts. Use a soft round brush with Transfer and press lightly.

05 Finish the details: A viewer's eye goes towards areas with high contrast, sharp edges, and high saturation. To make your dagger important in your painting, paint in pure white highlights, sharpen the blade's edge with the Sharpen tool, and paint in very saturated jewelry.





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Beginner's guide to digital
painting in Photoshop:
Sci-fi and Fantasy

Sci-fi and fantasy quick tips: shields

Pavel Kolomeyets shows you how to improve your character's armor with some quick decorative details 🎨

Create the impression of an embellished 3D form...

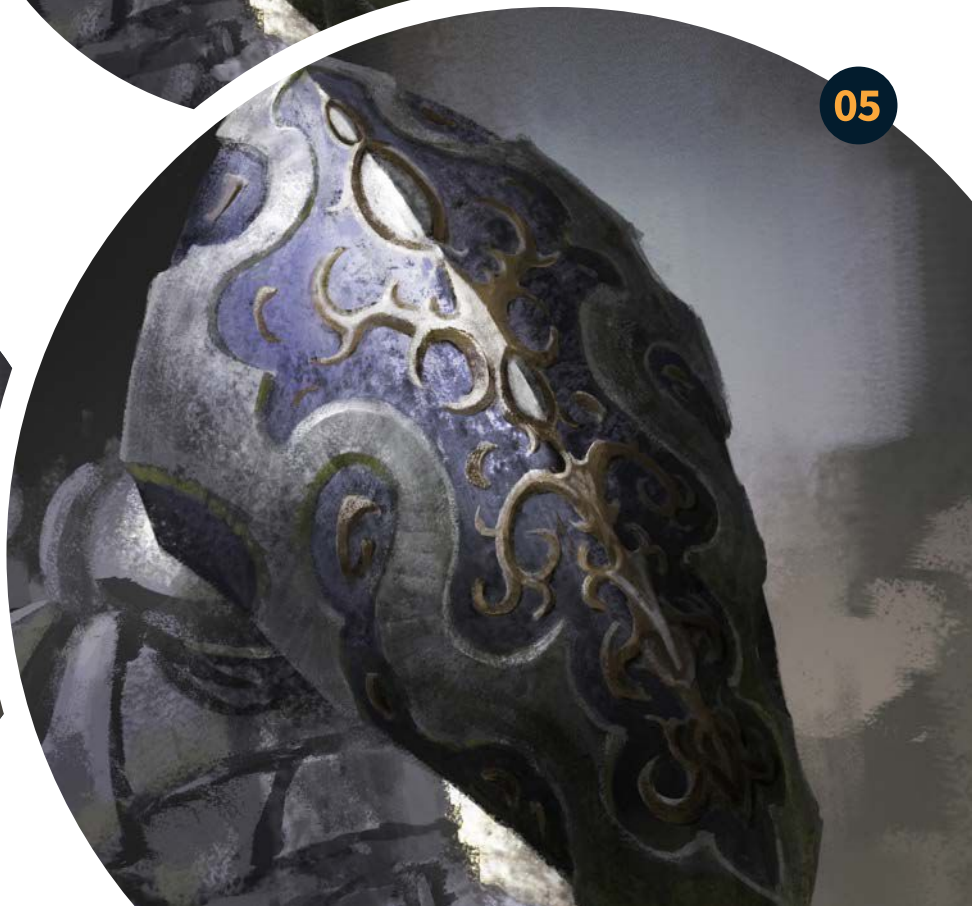
01 Block in the basic shape: Decide the shape of your shield, observing the 3D form to put it in perspective and light it correctly. Block in the shape using a default chalk brush with Texture (on Color Dodge mode) and Transfer (set on Flow). To convey a rough metallic material select Dual Brush in the Brush panel, picking any irregularly shaped brush for a patchy look.

02 Add major details: Once a form is established, start adding major details. Carry on using a default chalk brush with Transfer (set on Flow) and Texture (mode set to Color Dodge). Paint the ornament shape on one side first then replicate it on the other.

03 Use Dodge and Burn: Tweak and enhance the forms and lighting with a Dodge or Burn tool (by holding the Alt key to switch between them). Be careful not to over-burn or over-dodge your colors and values here. A non-destructive way of doing this is to paint on an Overlay layer with black (Burn) and white (Dodge).

04 Mimic volume: A nice trick to add volume to details if you have them on a separate layer is to duplicate the layer (Layer > Duplicate Layer) and darken the bottom copy with Curves (Image > Adjustments > Curves), or set its blending mode to Multiply. Now scale it up and see the shadow appear.

05 Add color and details: Color your shield by painting in a flat color on a new layer and then switch the mode to Overlay, Hard Light, or another if you prefer. Tweak the color with Hue/Saturation (Ctrl+U), adding the final details.



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Beginner's guide to digital
painting in Photoshop:
Sci-fi and Fantasy

Sci-fi and fantasy quick tips: body art

Pavel Kolomeyets shows you how to add body art details to help immerse your character in their narrative world ▶

Create subtle character details in just a few steps...

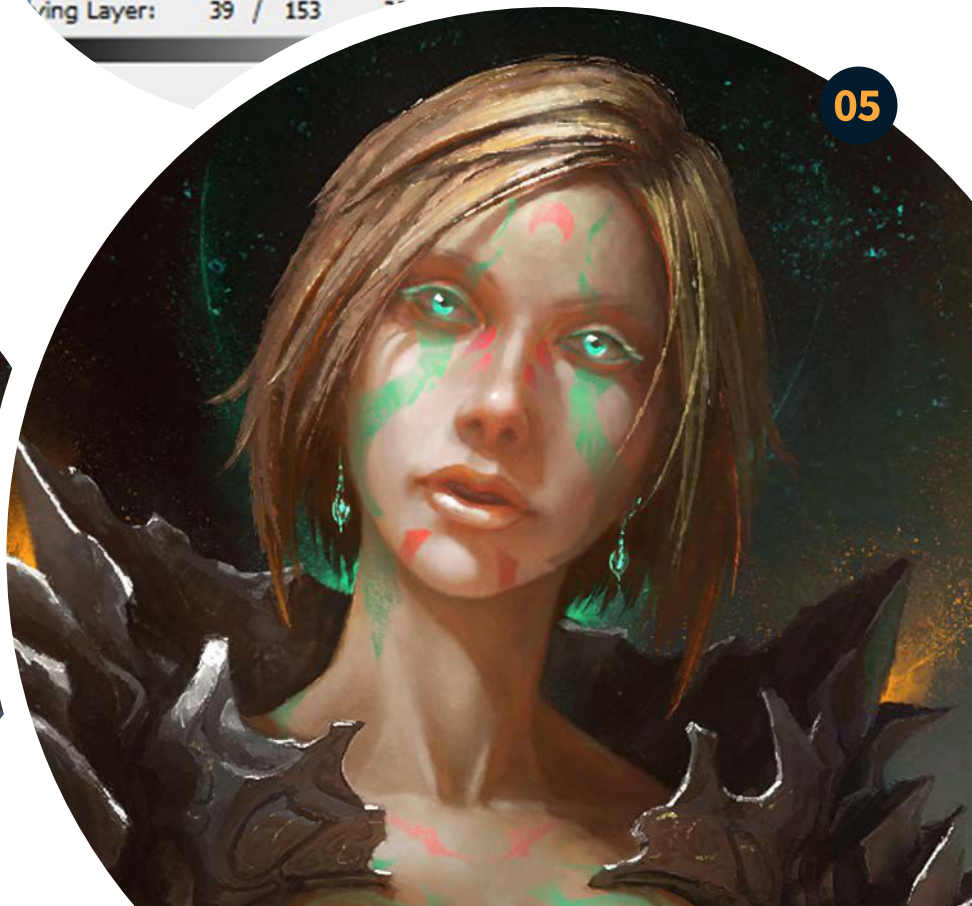
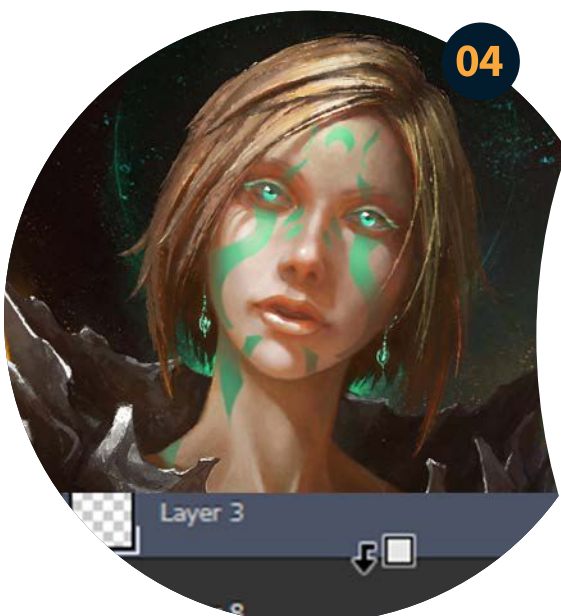
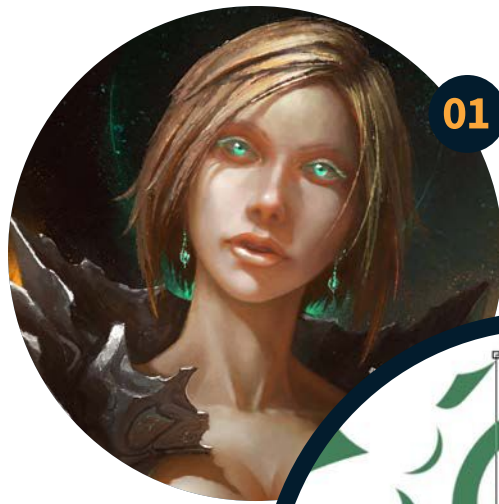
01 Clean character bases: Before you paint any marks, I advise you to keep all tattoo lines on separate layers and paint the character first. Trust me, you do not want to paint anatomy around body paint.

02 Create the pattern: Decide what kind of body paint you want to add. How much of the body will it cover? Is it symmetrical or themed? You can create complex-looking patterns by copying and transforming (Edit > Transform) just one shape. Try out different variations!

03 The Blend If option: Place the tattoo marks on a layer over your character. Double-click the layer to bring up the Layer Style panel with the Blend If option. The top slider represents your current layer's value range. The bottom one represents the underlying layers. Drag the sliders to mask out your value range. Alt+click+drag the shapes to create a transparent gradient.

04 Clipping masks and an Overlay layer: Add a new layer set to Overlay and click between the layers to create a clipping mask (or select Layer > Create Clipping Mask). Use black and white with a soft brush to burn and dodge your marks to fit with the forms and lighting.

05 Finishing touches: Tweak the colors by adding a new layer, Alt+click to connect it to the original clipping mask, and set the layer to Color or Hue. You can create texture with Soft Light or Overlay. Optionally, add roughness and weathering with layer masks ("Add layer mask" on the Layers panel). Rough texture brushes and hiding or revealing the layer leaves small imperfections.



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The Artist



Sykosan

sykosan.artstation.com

Software Used:

Photoshop

Sykosan is a freelance animator and illustrator based in London, UK. Sykosan has over twelve years experience working in the industry, and is the founder of animation studio Animation Squad.



Create a dynamic comic character

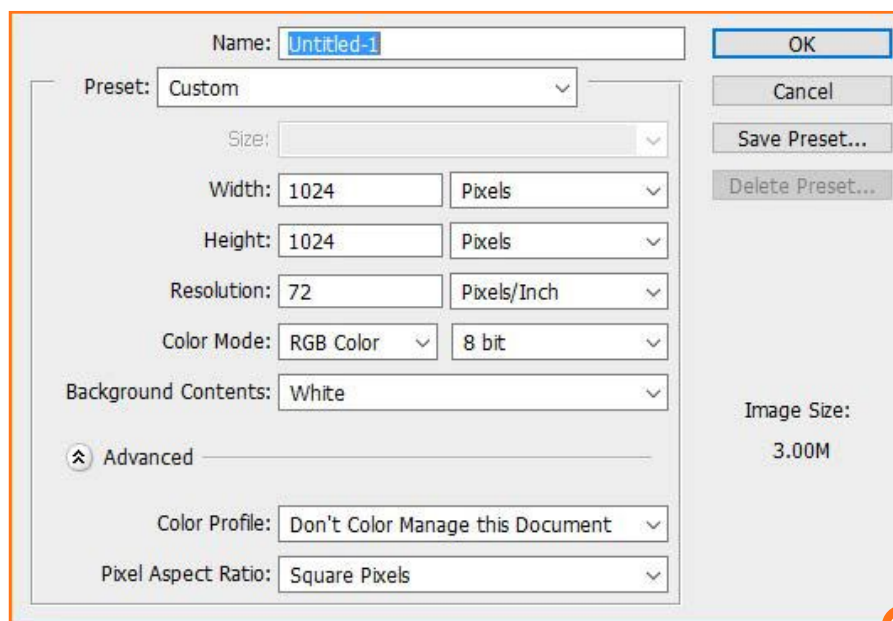
Animator and illustrator Sykosan demonstrates how to design and paint a sci-fi character in this sneak peek from *Beginner's Guide to Comic Art: Characters* 

See how light and shadow effects improve a comic illustration...

I am a huge fan of science fiction and am working on a personal project called *Dawn*, which is the name of the main character. She has a strong-willed personality and in this tutorial you will see how I convey this through a dynamic pose, a determined facial expression, and vibrant colors.

The way I work allows me to have great control over the colors and lighting of my illustrations by keeping each key step on separate adjustable layers. You will see how I go about creating my characters and hopefully learn and enjoy a few of my tricks.

01 Set up the canvas: Starting with the correct canvas is important. I always start with a rather small canvas of about 1,000-pixels tall and wide. I usually make it a square canvas because I don't always know what the final format will be, and I want to give myself the freedom to change my mind. Let the design dictate whether it is best suited for landscape or portrait orientation. Working at a low resolution stops you from getting into the details too soon and encourages you to concentrate on the overall dynamic of the image. To follow this tutorial properly, make sure that your first layer is white and that your brush is black.



01

02 Place the head first: I like to work with some basic tools; I personally use Photoshop but you will find the tools in most major drawing applications. Set your brush to 8 pixels and 100% hardness, with opacity at 100%, and flow at just 10% with stylus pressure activated.

When drawing a character, try to hold the pose yourself before you draw anything to see if it is a realistic pose; you can spend several minutes trying out different poses! When you know what you want to draw, start by sketching the head. To me, this is the focus point of a character; if the head is right the rest of the body follows easily.

03 Feel the pose: Once you are happy with the rough head, sketch in the rest of the body. Some artists like to construct the body methodically but I don't. I tend to keep my hand very loose at this point and allow myself to draw incorrectly. This is all about feeling the pose and allowing yourself freedom to try out different lines quickly. In my opinion, this is the crucial moment when your idea takes form and your creativity should run free without constraints. You'll have plenty of time to fix imperfections later. ▶

“Try not to be too precious about the lines; if it's not right it has to be erased”



02



03

04 Add the details: At this stage, add a few details. This helps to give a sense of whether the image is balanced or not. When something is out of proportion or doesn't feel right, don't hesitate to cut bits off, scale and rotate parts, or simply redraw. Try not to be too precious about the lines; if it's not right it has to be erased.

Continue concentrating on the head as the head position and facial expressions are one of the first things our eyes are drawn to. Next, move on to the hands and body language because body language speaks volumes and hands play a major role in defining the personality of a character.

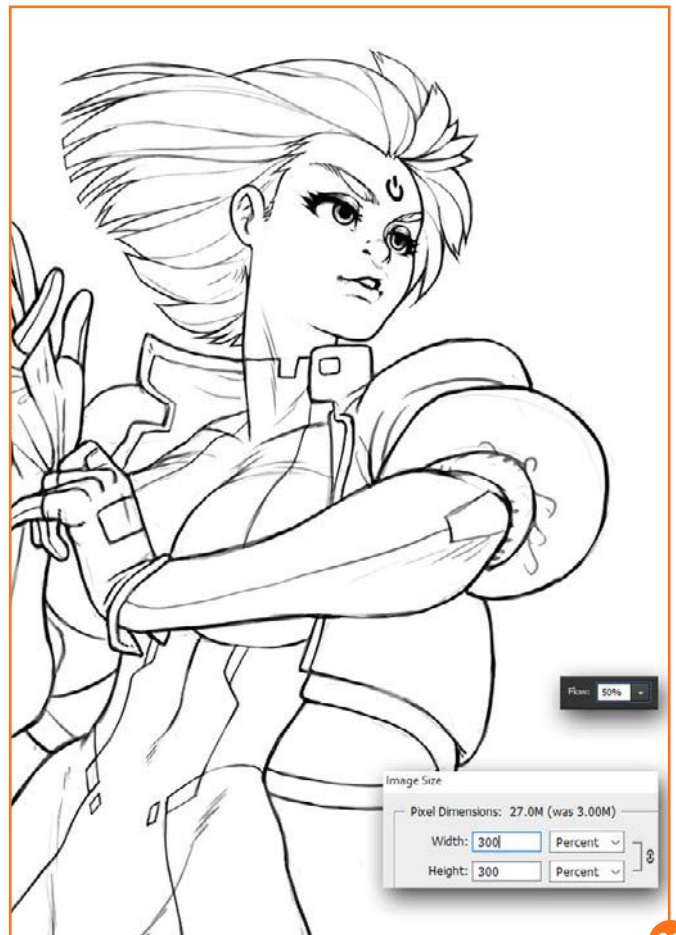
05 Consolidate the sketch: Once you are happy with the sketch and have drawn everything that you want, it is time to start cleaning things up. Make sure all the details are well placed, even if they're not well rendered. Try to work the whole picture evenly and apply the same level of focus to each area. At this stage, carry on working at a low resolution. I set my brush flow at 20% and make the lines darker and more defined.



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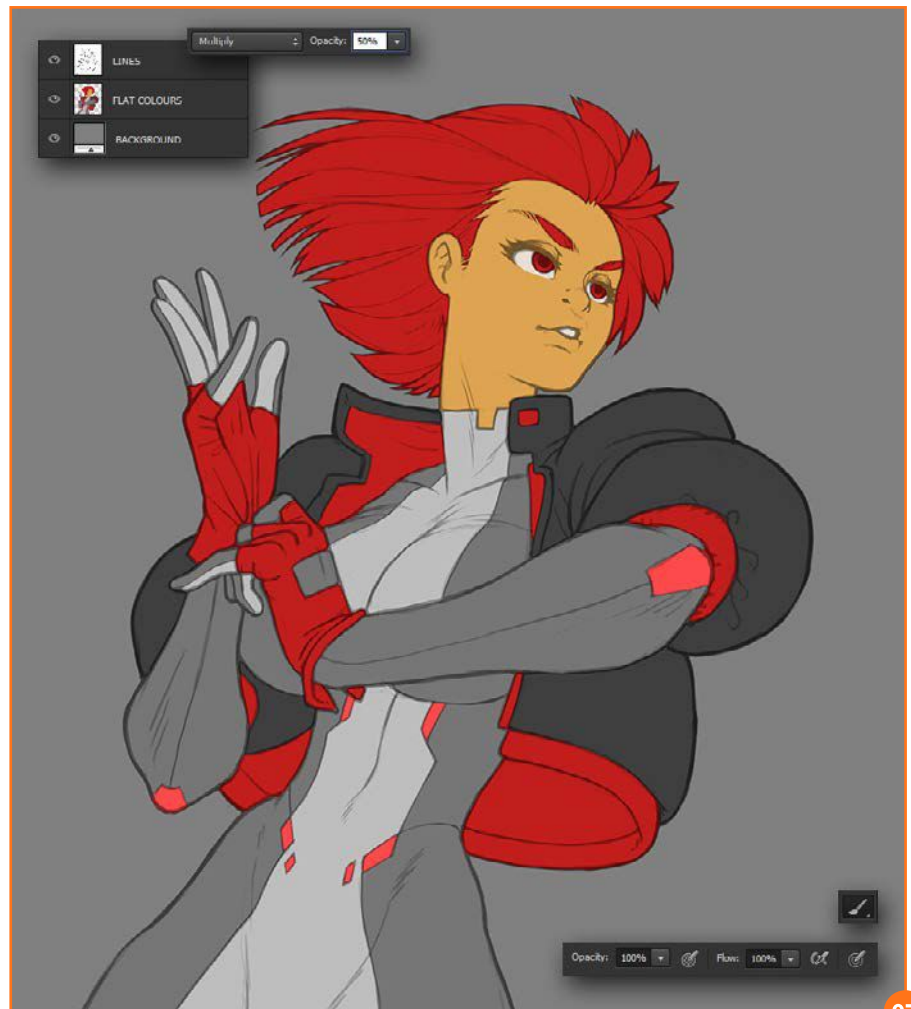
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06 Refine the lines: Time to scale things up: multiply the size of the canvas by 200% or up to 500%. Your brush needs to feel more like ink so push the flow to 50% and go over the whole image, cleaning up all those lines as you go. Now is the time to go crazy with adding details, if that's what you like.

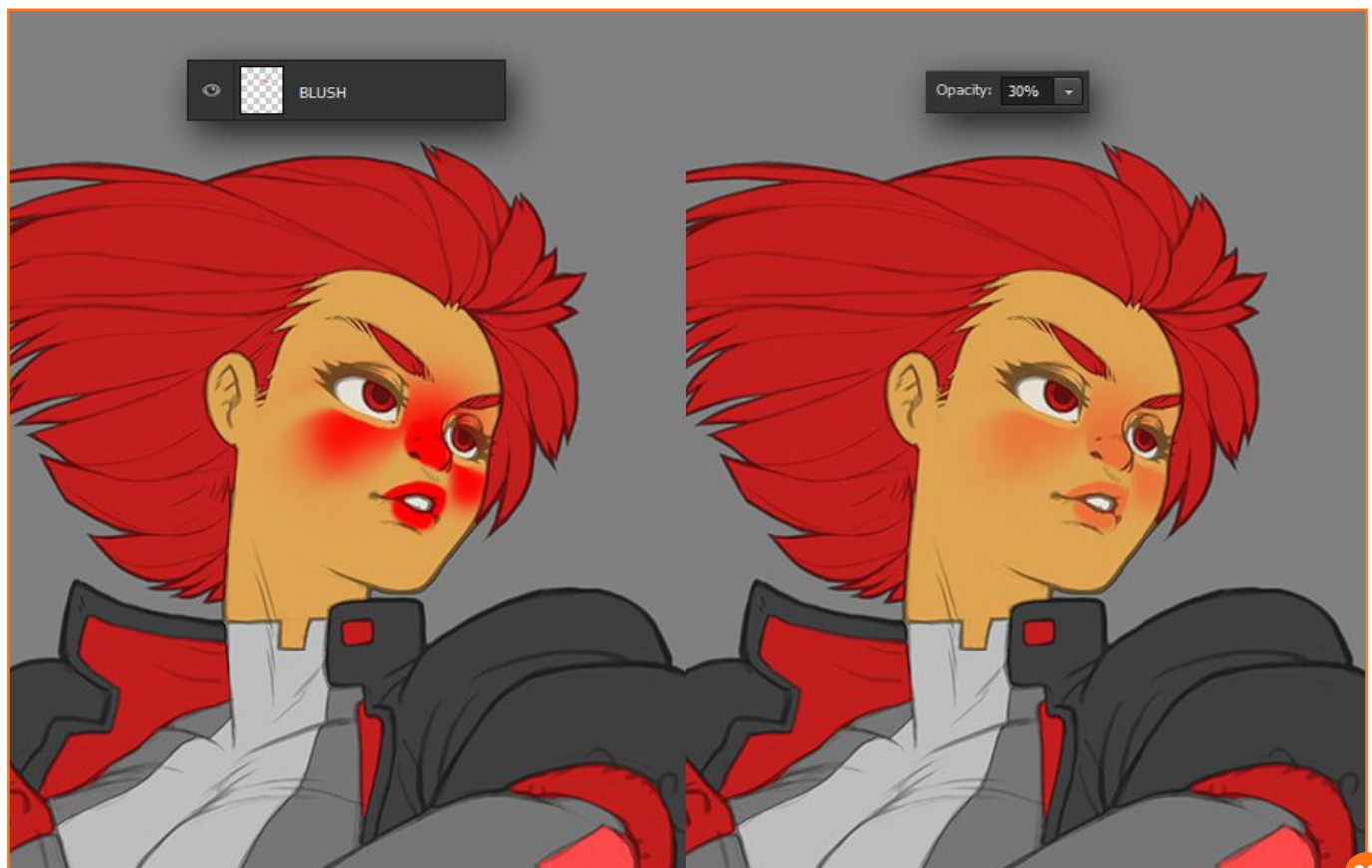
07 Lay the color base: Time to lay down the basic colors. First, create a new blank layer filled with a plain gray color for the background and place it underneath the line layer. Then create another blank layer for your colors and make sure it is between the gray background and your line layer. Turn your line layer to multiply mode and turn that layer's opacity down to 50%.

Go back to the new color layer and start drawing the colors. Again, use a hard brush with opacity and flow set to 100% with pressure sensitivity turned off. This part can be tedious but make sure you do a clean job of it. If your colors are nice and solid it is easy to come back later and change them with a paint-bucket tool if you want.

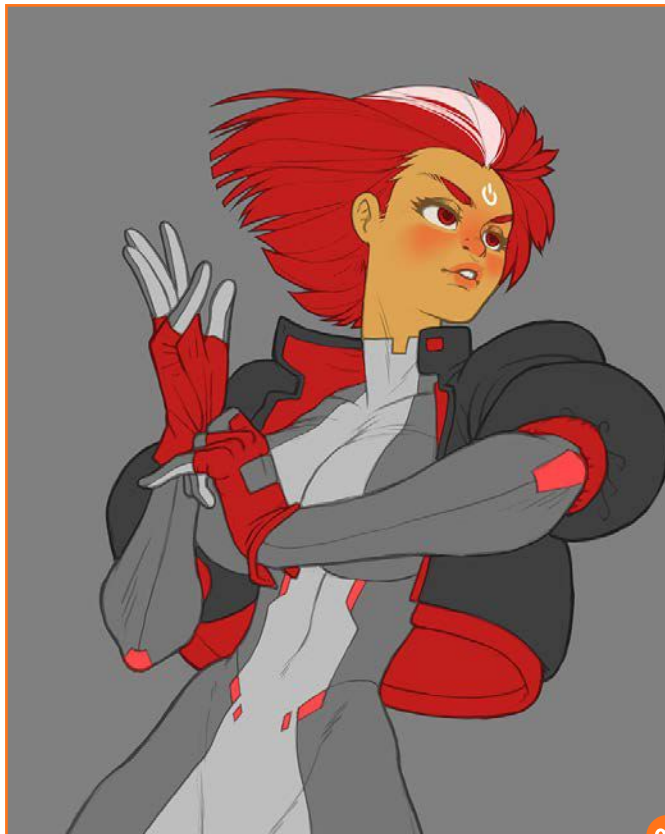
08 Add different hues: If you want to add some different hues, I recommend the following technique. To get different skin ►



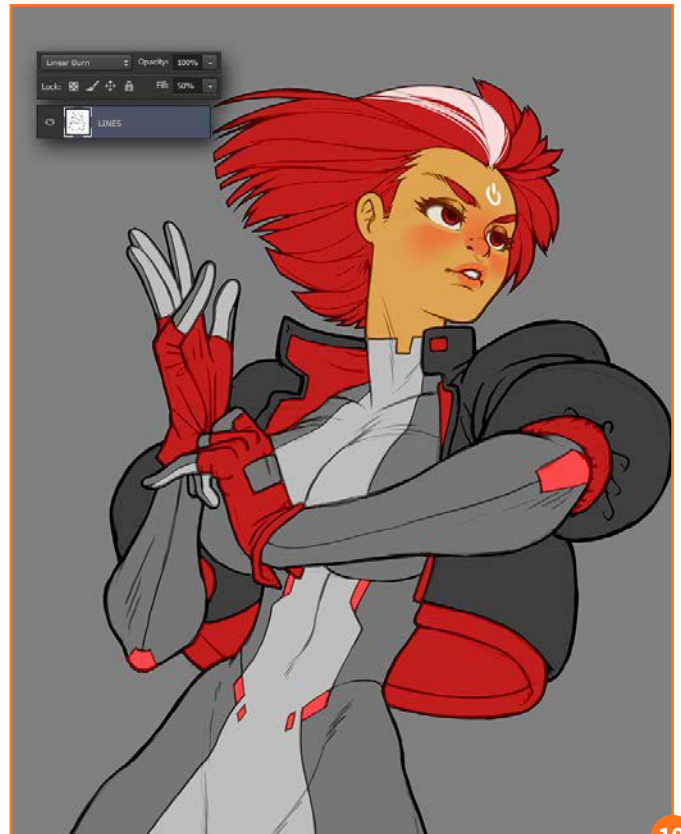
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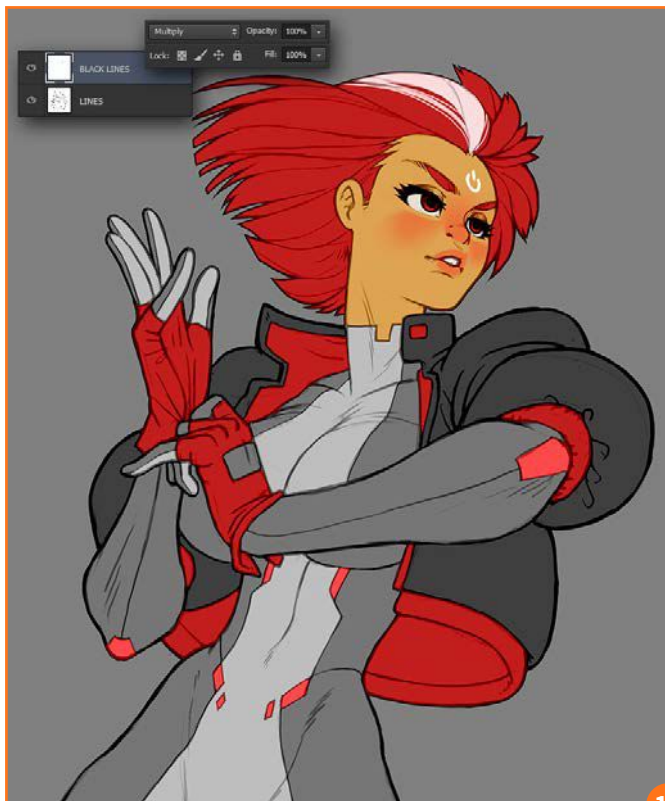
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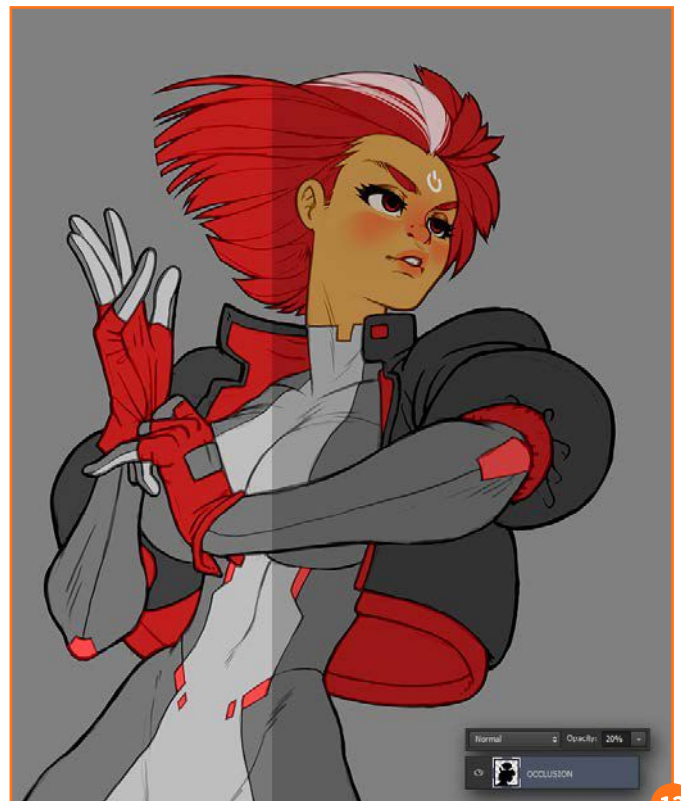
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12

tones for example, create a new layer, pick a classic red color, and start painting with a soft brush. Overdo it on purpose so that you can clearly see what you are doing. Then turn the opacity down to something more natural. You can do this for any color variation you need.

09 Add color details: This uses the same process as step 08. Add different color details such as the streak of white hair and the “power on” symbol on her forehead. At this stage you can add textures and patterns but only as flat colors. We will add shading later.

10 Color the lines: Here’s a nice trick to give your lines a nicer and more intense color. Select your line layer and change its mode from multiply to linear burn. Bring the opacity back to 100% but lower the fill to 50% this time, et voilà!

“In order to make the eyes stand out, make the eye lashes very black”

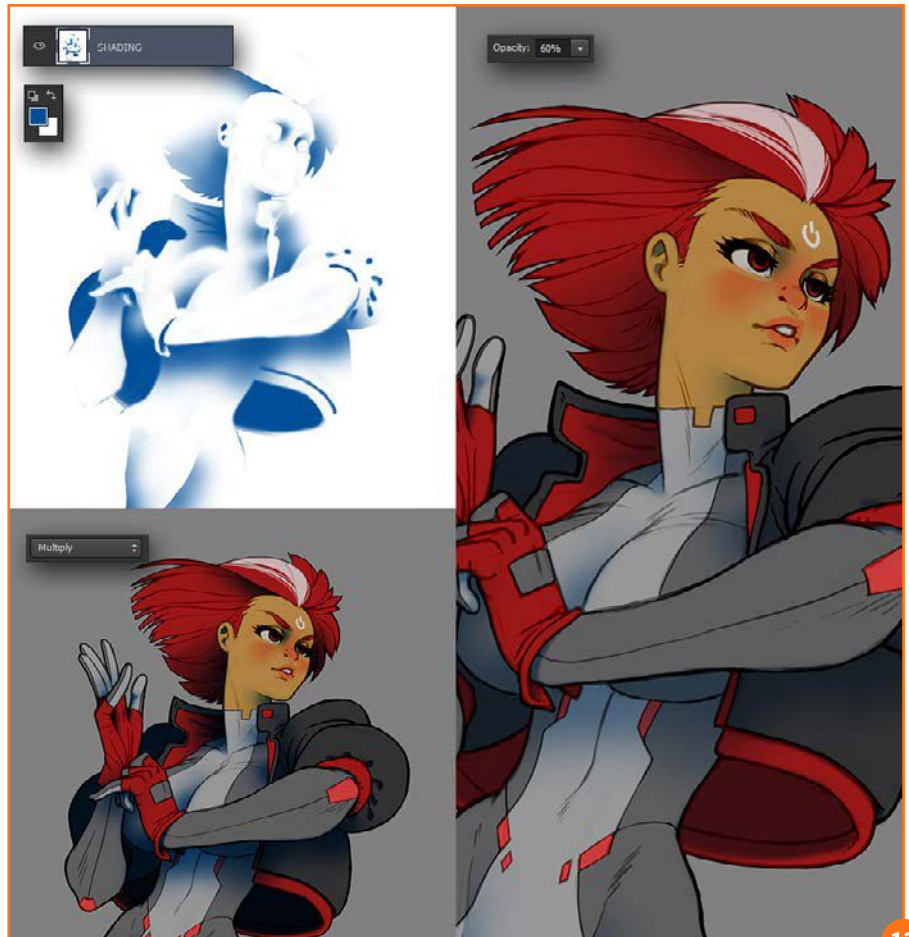
11 Make the eyes pop: If the face is the most important part of the body then the eyes are the most important part of the face. In order to make the eyes stand out, make the eye lashes very black. An easy way to do this is to duplicate the line layer and erase everything but the eyes, then switch this new layer to multiply mode with opacity and fill set to 100%. Now the eyes have more power and really stand out.

12 Control the luminosity: You may want to easily control the overall luminosity (brightness) of your character. You can do this by creating one new layer in which you paint the character's silhouette in pure black. This layer will sit on top of all the layers you have so far. Just by changing its opacity you can make your character darker or brighter. In this case, set the opacity to 20%, making the character slightly darker. You can go back to this layer later to fine-tune your illustration.

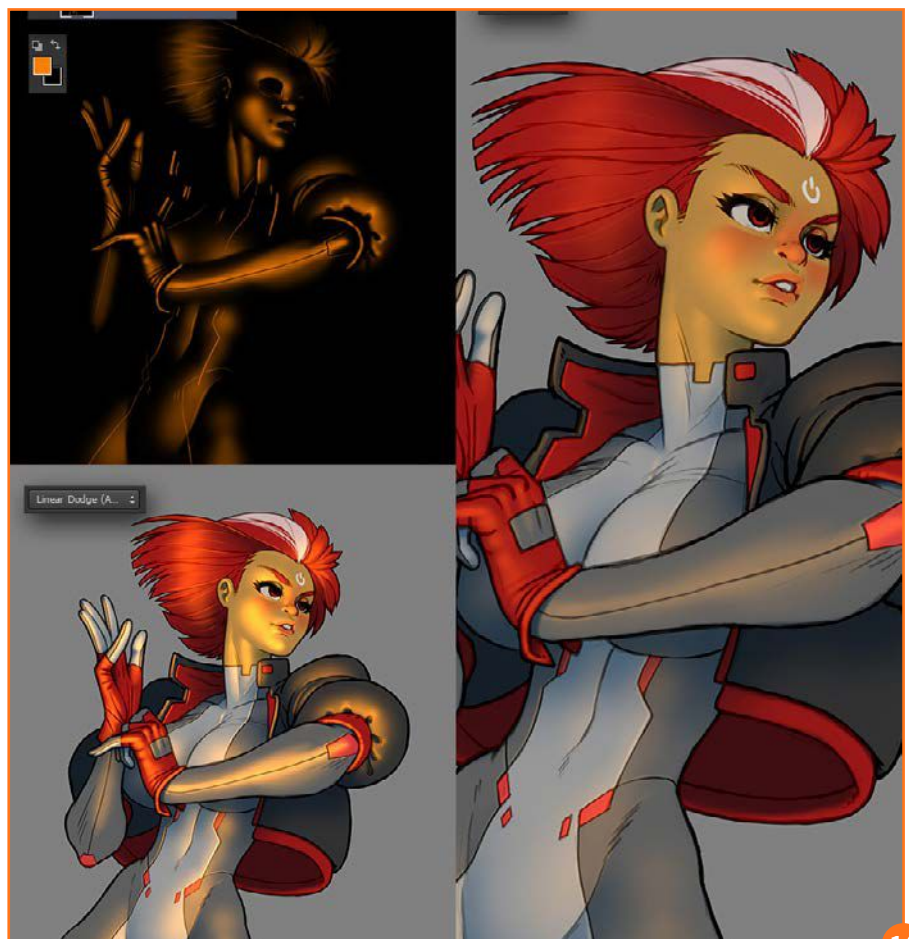
13 Add shading: Start shading by darkening all the areas that are clearly concave. Create a new layer that you fill with white, set this layer to multiply mode, and then choose a color for the shading. You could go for black, but giving a color such as dark blue adds a nice natural feel to the image. For this you can use a soft brush to paint the areas that are less exposed to light and a hard brush to clean the edges. Again, overdo it at first, then turn the fill down to something more natural, such as 60%.

“Using a warm orange feels very natural as it resembles the sun light”

14 Add diffuse lighting: Let's add some light to the character. I like to give light a hint of color and using a warm orange feels very natural as it resembles the sunlight. It is also the complementary color to the blue shading. To do this, first create a new layer and fill it with black, then chose a bright orange color to paint over. Turn your layer mode to linear dodge (also known as additive). With this first layer, paint what you could call the diffused light. Paint a rather soft and gentle light with a soft brush. Again, paint it too much but then turn the fill down to 30% in this case. Try to give a sense of volume with this light. ▶



13

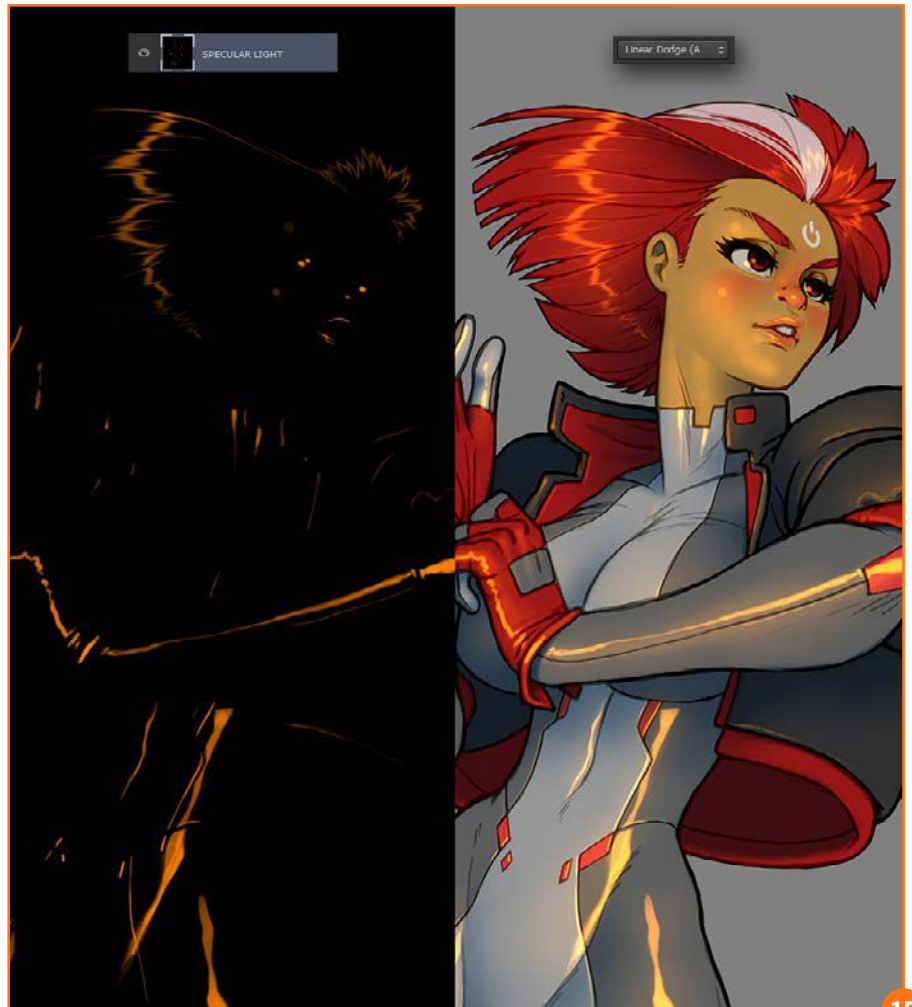


14

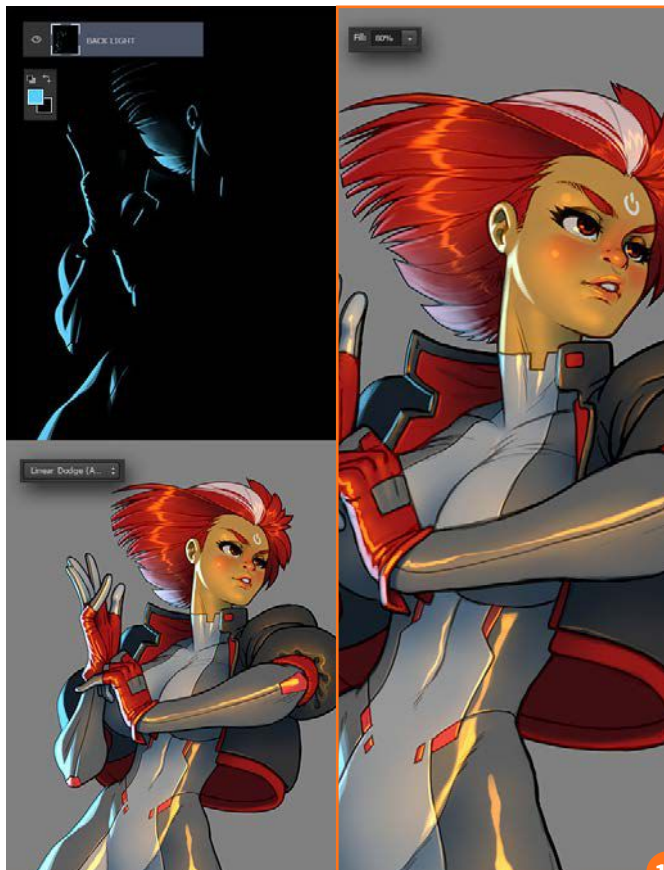
15 Add specular highlights: Create a similar layer to that in step 14, but this time paint the specular highlights. The idea here is to give the feeling that some parts are glossy. Use a harder brush this time and place highlights on parts of the character that are shiny, for example parts of her clothing. Adding specular highlights to the eyes will give them a lot more life.

16 Add back light: Now you can add as many lights as you want and they can all be of different colors. Here I wanted a thin rim light coming in from the back, so I chose blue instead of orange. To make it more pleasing to look at you can try playing with the thickness of the rim light.

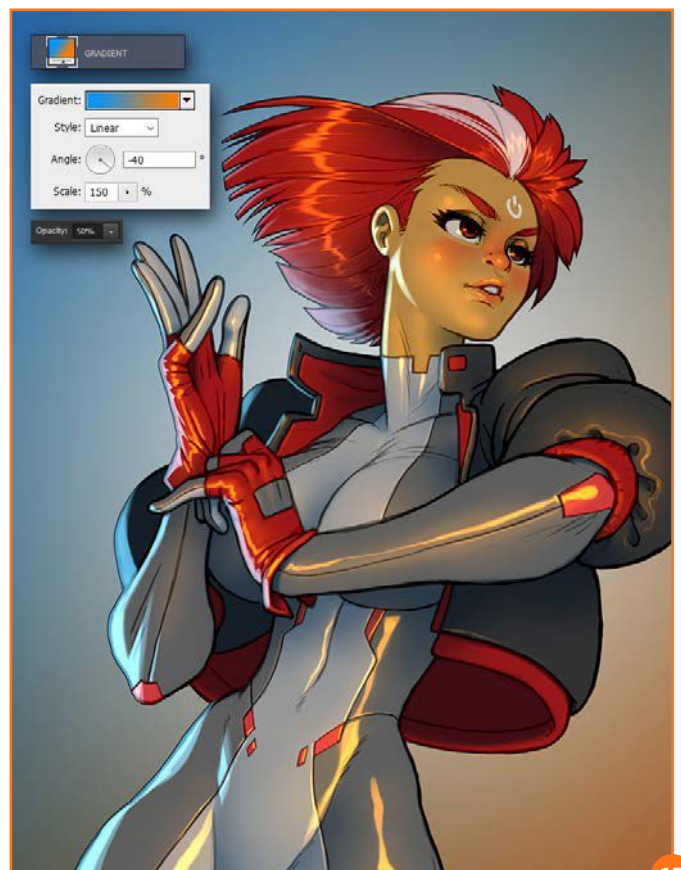
17 Create a simple background: Add a basic background because sometimes a simple gradient looks much nicer than plain white, and it is very easy to do. Create a new layer in the background and fill it with a gradient. Use the two same colors as you used for lighting; this will blend the character and the background together. Use saturated colors and then turn that layer's opacity down to bring back some of the gray background.



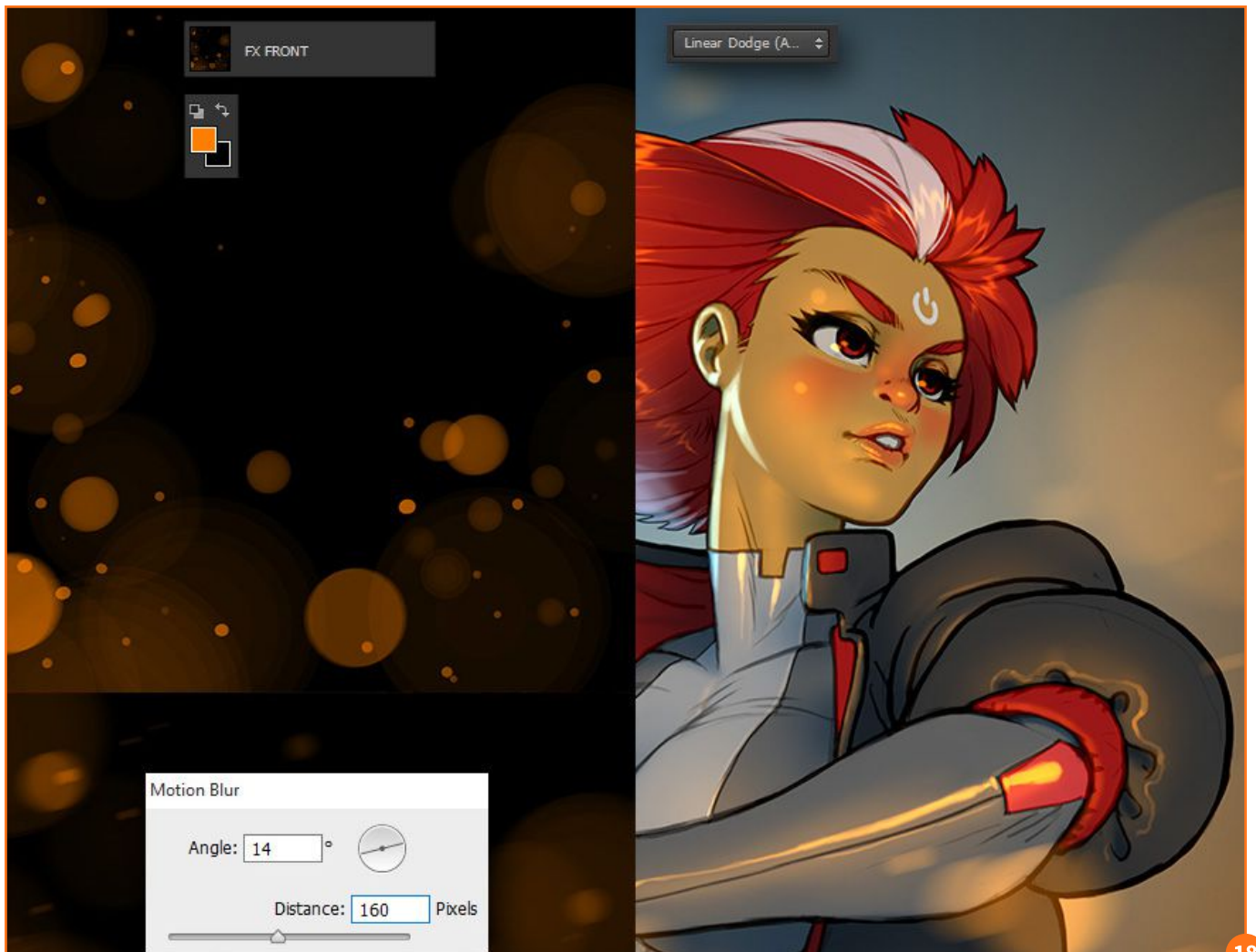
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16



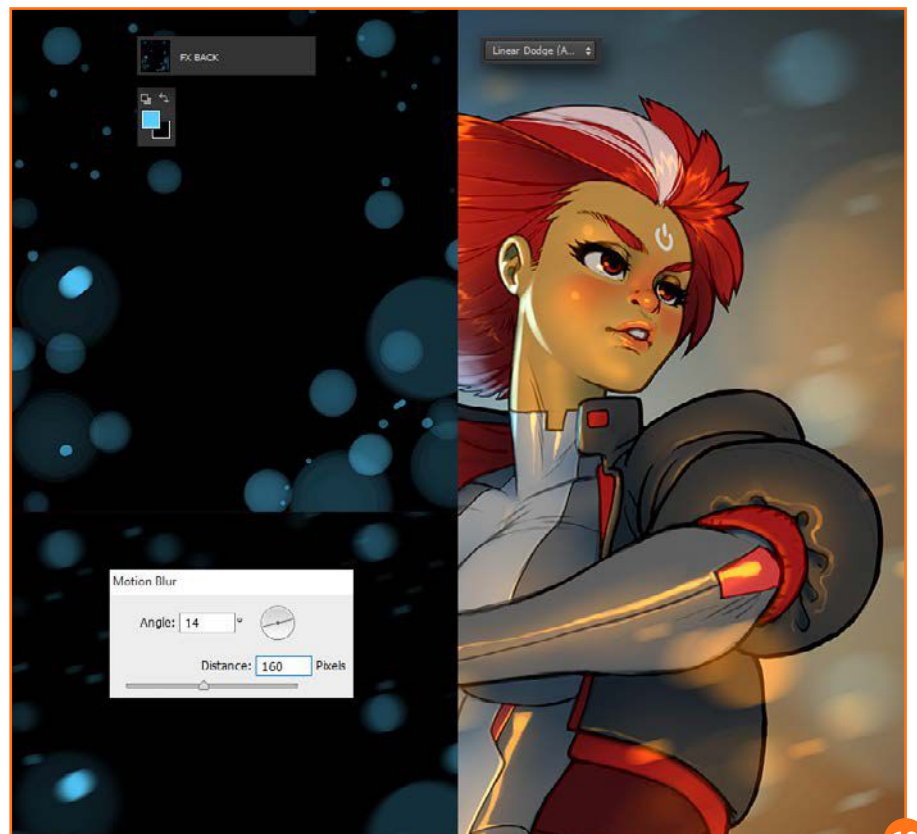
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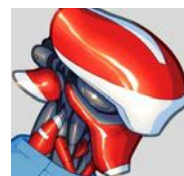
18

18 Foreground effects: Effects are a great way to add depth or dynamism to an image, and they can be done quickly. Create a new layer just like the layers used for lighting (see step 14) and paint some simple disks of light that give an “out of focus” effect. Add a little bit of directional blur at a slight angle. This gives the scene a sense of movement. This layer sits on top of all the other layers.

19 Background effects: Now add a similar effect but in the background. Create one more light layer and place it behind the character but in front of the background. This time make it light blue and add the same directional blur. ●



19



Sykosan
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Breathtaking sci-fi concepts

Freelance concept artist Juan Pablo Roldan talks with us about his inspirations and techniques

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The Artist



Zack Cy (Khor Chaw Yang)
artstation.com/artist/zackcy

Software Used:
Photoshop

Zack Cy is a freelance concept artist and illustrator from Penang, Malaysia. He is currently working as an art college lecturer at The One Academy in Penang.

Reinvent the return of Persephone

Zack Cy shows you how to give the Ancient Greek myth of Persephone's return from the underworld dramatic twist ▶





Learn how to reinvent a classic mythical character...

In this tutorial I will share with you some of the tips and techniques I use for creating a detailed digital illustration with strong mood and lighting and how to portray narrative. To complete a detailed illustration, it would require your attention to detail, enthusiasm, inspiration, and passion to accomplish the task. In this tutorial, we will re-imagine a scene from Greek mythology – where Persephone returns to the upper world, heralding spring. Persephone is the daughter of Zeus and Demeter (the goddess of the harvest) and wife of Hades; she has to spend a third of the year in the underworld with Hades and the rest of the year with her mother above. When she is with her husband the earth is barren and nothing grows; her return marks the start of spring.

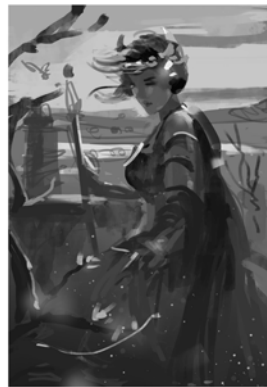
Before you start, I suggest you do a bit of research to create a visual reference mood board. For this illustration, we are going to create a completely fresh, new design and scene. First and foremost, you will need to brainstorm a few ideas and create some thumbnails in Photoshop. Persephone's return should be epic and spectacular, set in a fantasy environment, and focus on visual storytelling with a touch of magic for good measure.

“If I want to rethink the composition or come up with something a little “outside of the box” I find it useful to take a short coffee break away from my workstation and come back with a fresh mind”

01 **Sketch/explore composition:** As I mentioned in the introduction, Persephone's return means everything begins to grow again, so this should be the focus of your illustration. In my illustration Persephone will touch the decayed branches and fresh leaves will magically sprout everywhere she touches.

When you have decided on the narrative you are going to illustrate, you should roughly sketch out a few gray scale thumbnails of possible composition ideas. You want to capture the shape and overall composition rather than get lost in the details at this early stage. Try changing

- Explore and rough out at least three ideas



1



2



3



4

01



- Draw the initial rough line work on top of your thumbnail to explore the pose and design

02

the camera angle or orientation of the canvas to find the best composition. If I want to rethink the composition or come up with something a little “outside of the box” I find it useful to take a short coffee break away from my workstation and come back with a fresh mind. I tried a different

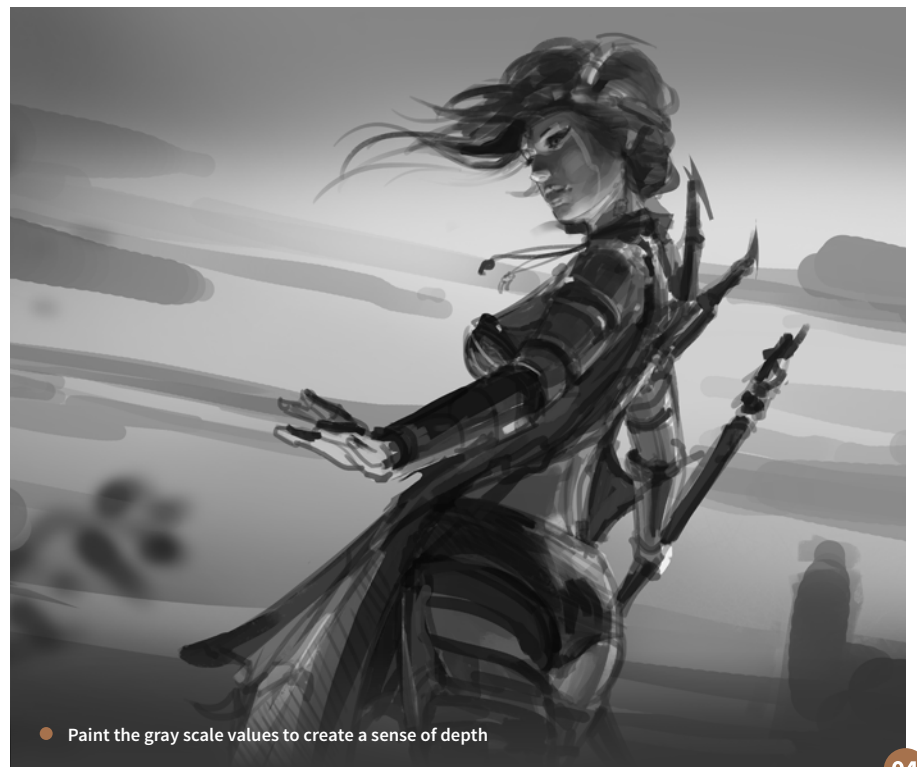
landscape layout (thumbnail 4) that shows more of the environment and Persephone has a more dynamic pose. You want to pick thumbnail to take forward; it should be the one that is better than the others from a storytelling perspective as well as having a more interesting composition.



03

02 Rough sketch: Once you have chosen the thumbnail to take forward, you can use that image as a basis for drawing in the initial line work. Reduce the opacity of the thumbnail layer and on a new layer (Shift+Ctrl+N) roughly sketch in Persephone and some of the background details. This is the perfect opportunity to explore different designs, poses, and silhouettes. The rough line work you do here will serve as a guide for the final illustration, so you want to get in the important details and lines as early as possible. This is also a good time to do some research for the materials as well as background structures.

03 Detailed sketch: When you are finished with the rough sketch you can move on to tidying up the line work. As with Step 02, reduce the opacity of the construction sketch layer and create a new layer above. On this new layer you can adjust and edit the pose and redefine some of the design elements. This is a good time to think about costume design ideas and start adding them to the sketch. In my sketch I have chosen to add some fantasy and steampunk elements to Persephone's costume. You can also begin to add some more background details based on the initial concept. To finish off this stage, work in some gray scale values to suggest depth and distance in the background, although you should remember the character is the main focal point of the illustration.



● Paint the gray scale values to create a sense of depth

04

04 Gray scale: If you are not happy with the composition you can rearrange the line work to get the best possible narrative look. You don't need to worry too much about the neatness of your guide sketch because most of this will be hidden in the final image.

As Persephone is the focus you should spend some time working on the lighting and shading.

Separate the character from the background on two different layers and create a new layer between these two to work in gray scale, giving the image a sense of depth. Using the same gray scale values from the previous step, work on adding lighting and shading to Persephone. As we are going for a dramatic scene, you want to make sure the lighting is suitably epic – if in doubt do some research and look for appropriate ▶

references. You don't need to worry about rendering and blending the character into the background, focus on getting her right.

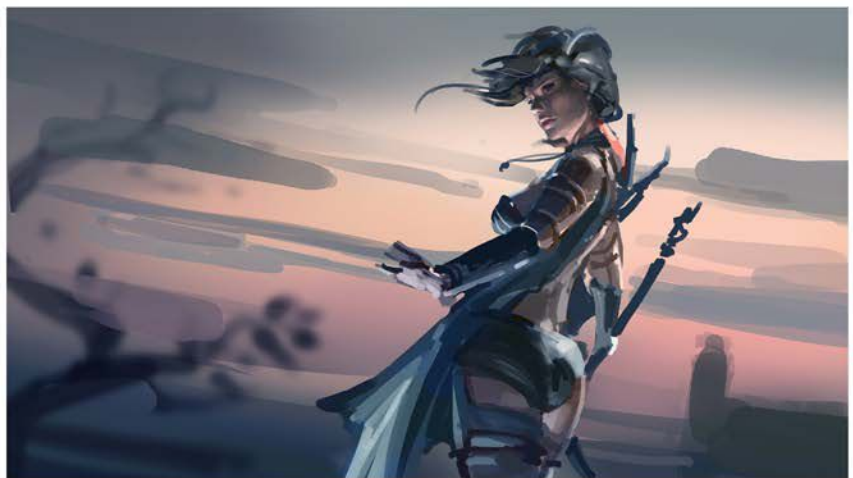
“Once you have found the right contrast combination you can use Color Balance to play with different variations of color to create differently colored thumbnails”

05 Adding color: With the character lighting sorted you can begin to play with color. There are a number of ways you can add color to your sketch. The first method is to create a new layer above the gray scale layer and set the Blend Mode to Color. You could also try playing with other blending modes, such as Screen, Lighten, and Multiply. Screen mode generally lightens the colors, Lighten selects the lightest color and changes the darkest pixels, and finally Darken does the opposite, it darkens the lightest pixels. You can also use the Color Balance (Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Color Balance) or Hue/Saturation (Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Hue/Saturation) adjustment layers to manually adjust the colors of the painting.

To find the right color scheme you should play around with cool and warm contrasts. The character should be warm, as she is bringing warmth and new life to the environment which should be cool to reflect the barren nature of winter. Once you have found the right contrast combination, you can use Color Balance to play with different variations of color to create differently colored thumbnails; then pick the one that is most appealing – I went with a slightly warmer version to reflect the coming spring and return of hope.

06 Rendering the character: At this stage, you can move on to rendering the character's face as it is the focal point, and the viewer's eye will be drawn here first. You should select a skin tone based on your chosen color thumbnail and begin adding color to her face. To keep the shape and proportions in check, as well as ensuring your color choices match those from the previous step, duplicate the color thumbnail on top of the layer you are working on.

For rendering the face you should use a hard brush for the solid edges such as the jaw line, and a soft brush for blending to suggest volume.



● Paint the gray scale values to create a sense of depth

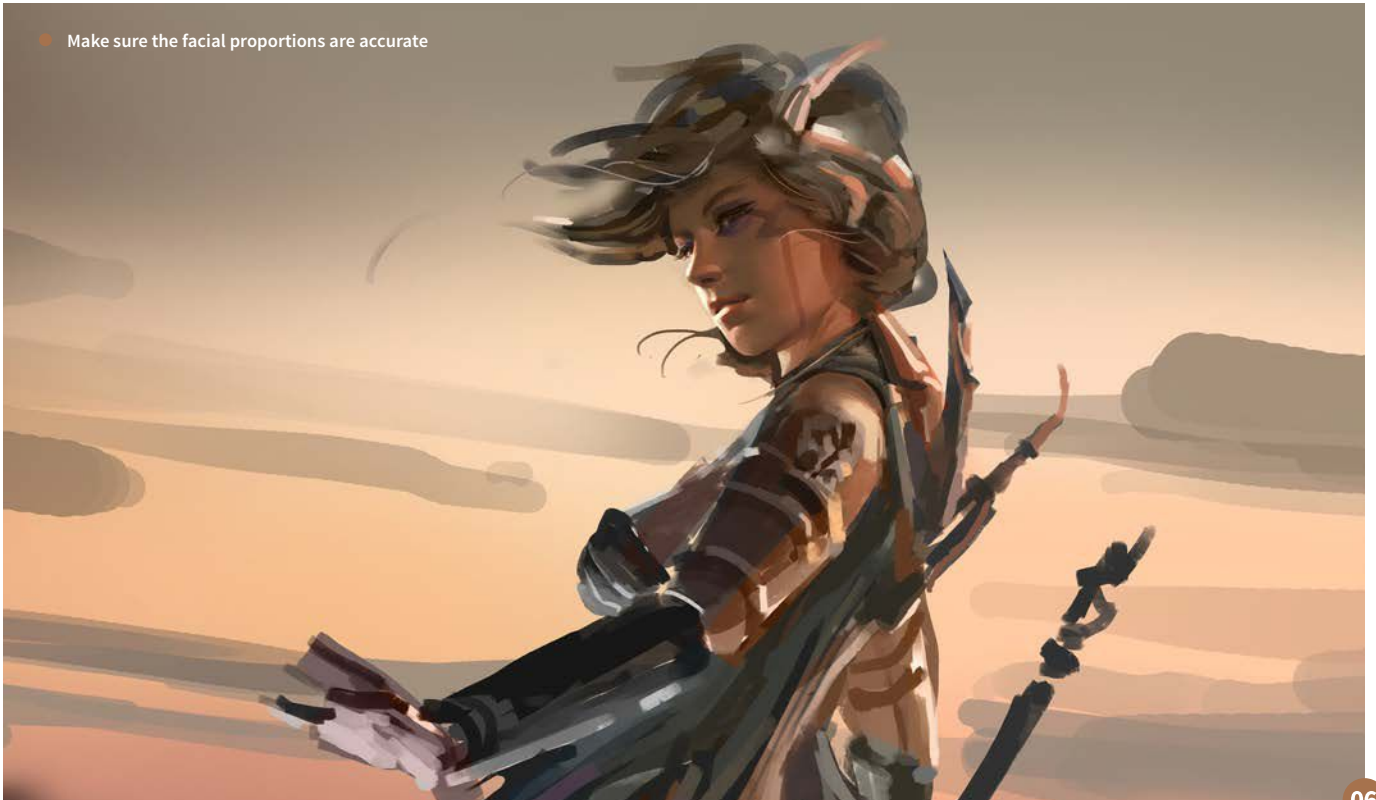
05

⚡ PRO TIPS

Black/white checking

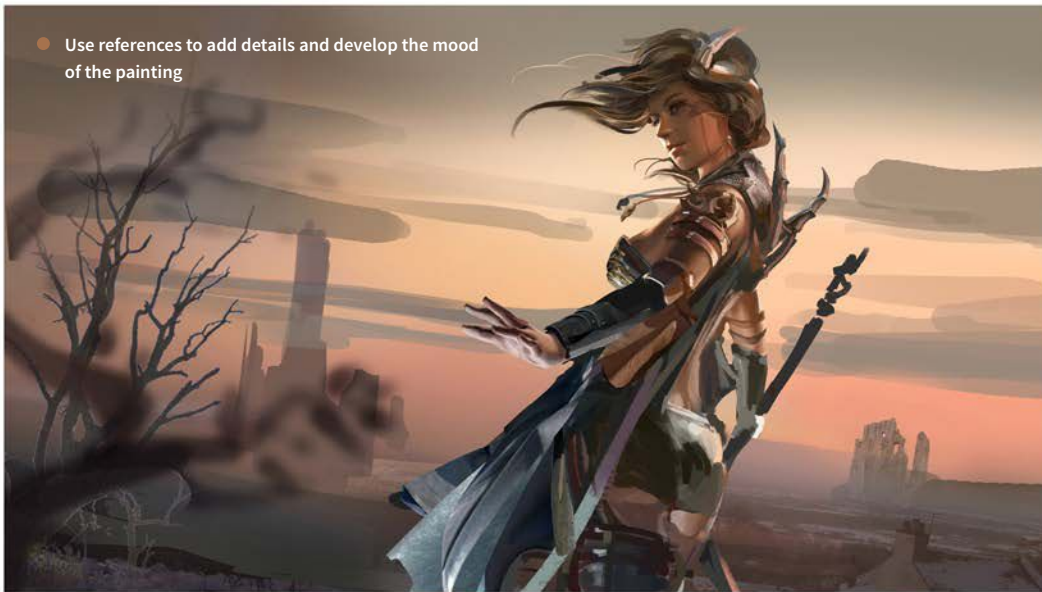
Check the gray scale to make sure that the values stay intact; lighting and shadows plays a huge role in this, so you should create a new layer, fill it with black and move it to the most top layer, then change the blending mode to Hue/Saturation to check the values to make sure that there's no complete black and white used in the illustration.

● Make sure the facial proportions are accurate



06

● Use references to add details and develop the mood of the painting



07

As the character is the main focus, your priority is the face and you need to make sure that there are no mistake – if there are problems with the proportions you should fix them now. For rendering the character, turn on layer transparency to prevent you breaking up the shapes that you created at the start of the step.

07 Photo textures: If you didn't search for reference images in Step 01, you should do it now, as you will be using them to add texture and materials to your illustration. Use the Lasso tool (L) to cut out suitable parts of your reference photos and put them on top of your character and the environment, then

adjust them using Warp (Edit > Transform > Warp) to match the photo textures to your designs underneath. Keep each new photo texture on a separate layer, this is so you can easily make adjustments, change the color, or remove a specific texture without affecting the others. I am now slightly adjusting the mood of the character ►

and determining the color as well as the lighting. To make sure everything is consistent and blends well with the rest of the illustration, use the Levels tool (Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Levels) to edit the photo textures, and the Color Balance to adjust the colors. You can also adjust the opacity of the photo textures to better blend them to fit with the mood of the character and illustration.

“Remember, less is more; try not to overdo her face as you may find the brushstrokes will mess up the render”

08 **Detailing the character:** You should spend a bit more time on this step to work out all the intricate details of the character's face and costume. So they don't distract you, you should turn off the foreground and background layers, just leaving the character layer. As you work on Persephone you should focus on the face and go back over the facial structure to make sure the lighting works well with the contours and hasn't thrown up any weird proportion errors.

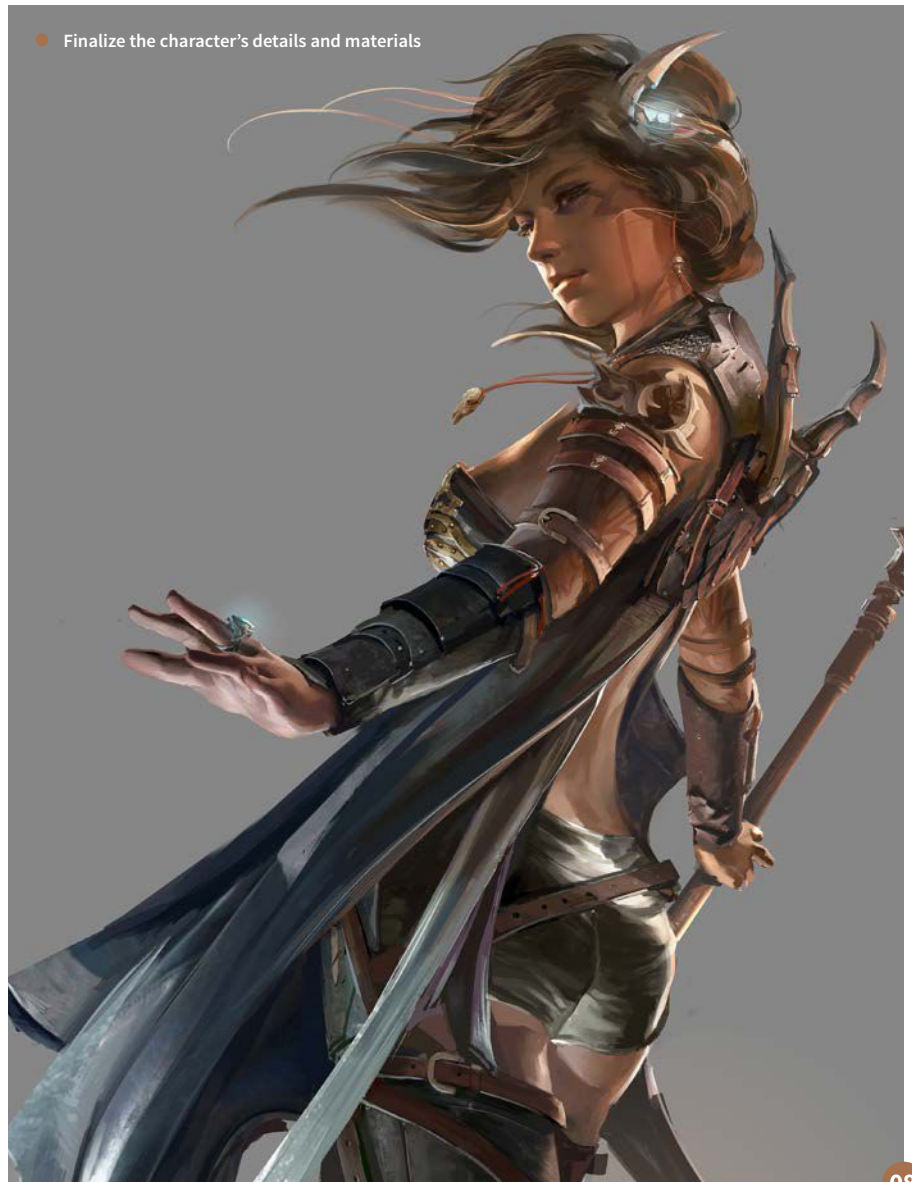
Remember, less is more; try not to overdo her face as you may find the brushstrokes will mess up the render. When you are happy with the face you can turn your attention to her costume. You will want to render and blend in the photo textures to give a cohesive and convincing look.

Choose a hard textured brush to render the metal surfaces. You may also want to use some metal references too while rendering this – you may need to have some metal reference to better simulate the metallic materials. Always remind yourself of what sort of material you are rendering and how reflective that surface is. A matte surface will have a diffuse reflection, whereas a highly reflective surface will have a specular reflection.

09 **Adding depth:** When you work on the background and foreground, use a soft brush to add the basic tone for the sky and, at the same time, use the Lasso tool to create the shape of the clouds, branches and leaves. While working on the background, make sure that the tonal values do not overpower the character.

Use the photo references you previously searched for to add on top and overpaint these to blend them with the environment. You are creating the moment when winter comes to an end and

● **Finalize the character's details and materials**



08

the spring finally returns; therefore you could help to sell this narrative by adding a snowy photo to the ground. As for the sky, portraying a sunrise also evokes the feeling of hope and a new beginning. There are plenty of reference photos on the internet which will help you to accurately create that early morning atmosphere.

To create a sense of depth, you can use the Levels adjustment tool to enhance the background, and also the Gradient tool with lower opacity to blend the color. Make sure you don't skip this step, otherwise you may end up washing away all the details you added in the previous steps.

10 **Finishing touches:** To finish, create some different size shapes in the foreground and use Motion Blur (Filter > Blur > Motion Blur) on these shapes to emphasize

motion, as well as to cover any small mistakes on the illustration. To give the illustration that little touch of interest you can add some particles or some sparks. Change the layer mode to Linear Dodge but make sure the effect doesn't affect or distract from the main focal point.

Adding the final touches can be a very time consuming part of any digital illustration, but it is worth the effort as you will get a much better final result. You should add some highlights to the edges of the character using a fine brush, then use the Lasso tool to select these highlights and change the blend mode to Color Dodge.

All of this will further enhance the highlights, especially on the hard surfaces. To wrap it up, keep playing around with these final touches until you get a satisfying, visually interesting result. ●

- Render the environment to enhance the overall depth and atmosphere



09

- Finalize the entire illustration with finishing touches and additional effects to create visual impact



10

⚡ PRO TIPS

Flip the canvas

The reason to flip the canvas is to check on the overall proportion and the structure of the entire painting, especially the composition, as well as to give you a new, fresher perspective of your illustration. To make this easier you can set up a shortcut, I like to use Ctrl+F.

Work on larger resolution documents

I recommend working on large resolution images right from the start, so when you shrink the image down the pixels will be compressed and create details and sharpness on the entire illustration. I like to use a 10k pixel document, but of course it will affect the response of the brush when you paint.

The Artist



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Creating a sci-fi character concept

Pei Zhang shares how he creates his sci-fi character concepts in Photoshop using Alchemy thumbnails [▶](#)

All images © Pei Zhang



The Artist



Pei Zhang

artstation.com/artist/peiz

Software Used:
Photoshop

Pei Zhang is an illustrator at *Rocket Gaming Systems*, Las Vegas, USA. He has a Master's degree in Game Development and has previously worked for Tencent Games, Riot Games, Runic Games and as lead artist at KOEI TECMO.

Pick up tips on how to bring a sci-fi mech to life...

In this making of I will show you how I create a character concept in Alchemy, and adapt the details to create a final concept in Photoshop. I will start with the initial concept design and finish with the detailed character. For this making of I have created a sci-fi mech with some biological attributes; when I create character concepts I like to consider the features, weapons and even the temperament of the character. I want the viewer to be

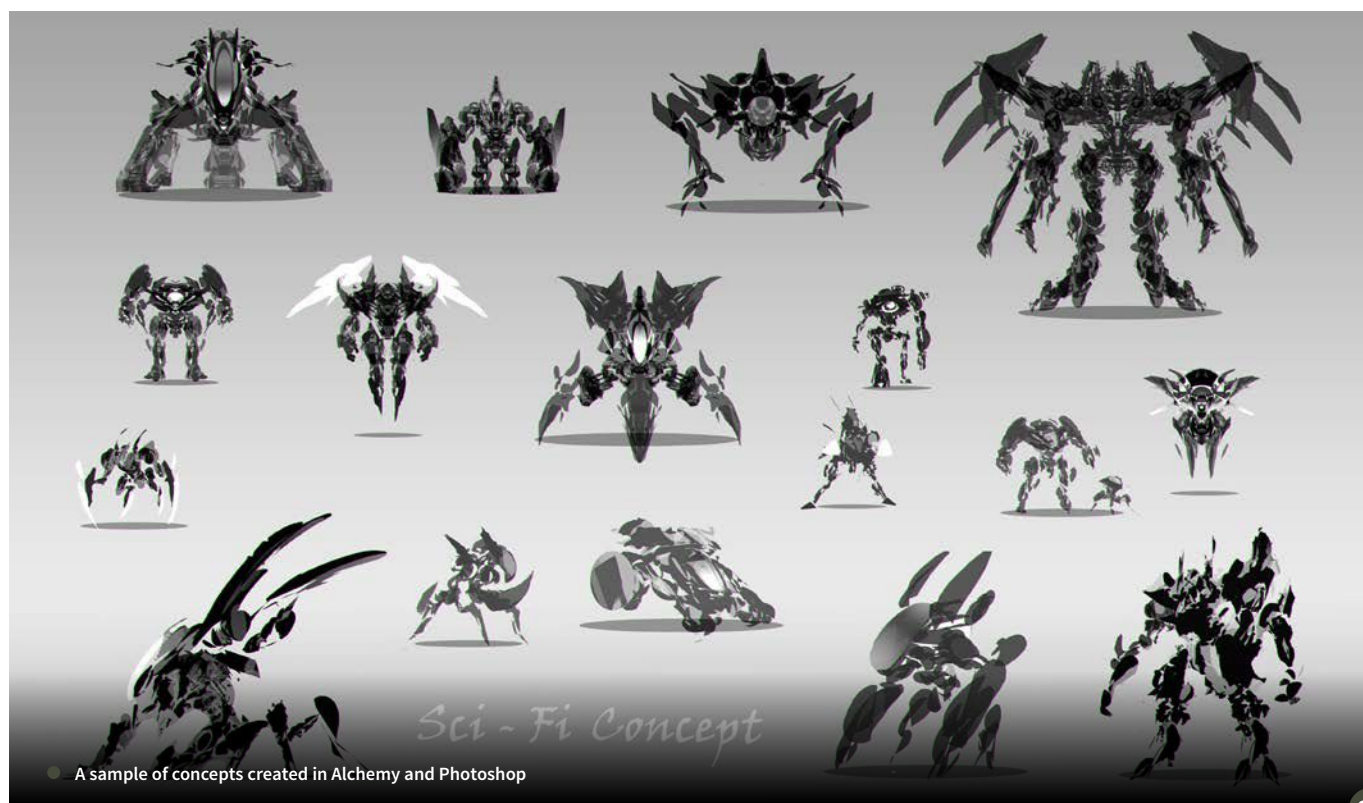
able to understand and appreciate the functionality of my design. Also, I will explain in detail some of the different tools and methods I use to create my concepts.

“I look for images that will help me to convey a strong silhouette, emotion, and functionality to the viewer”

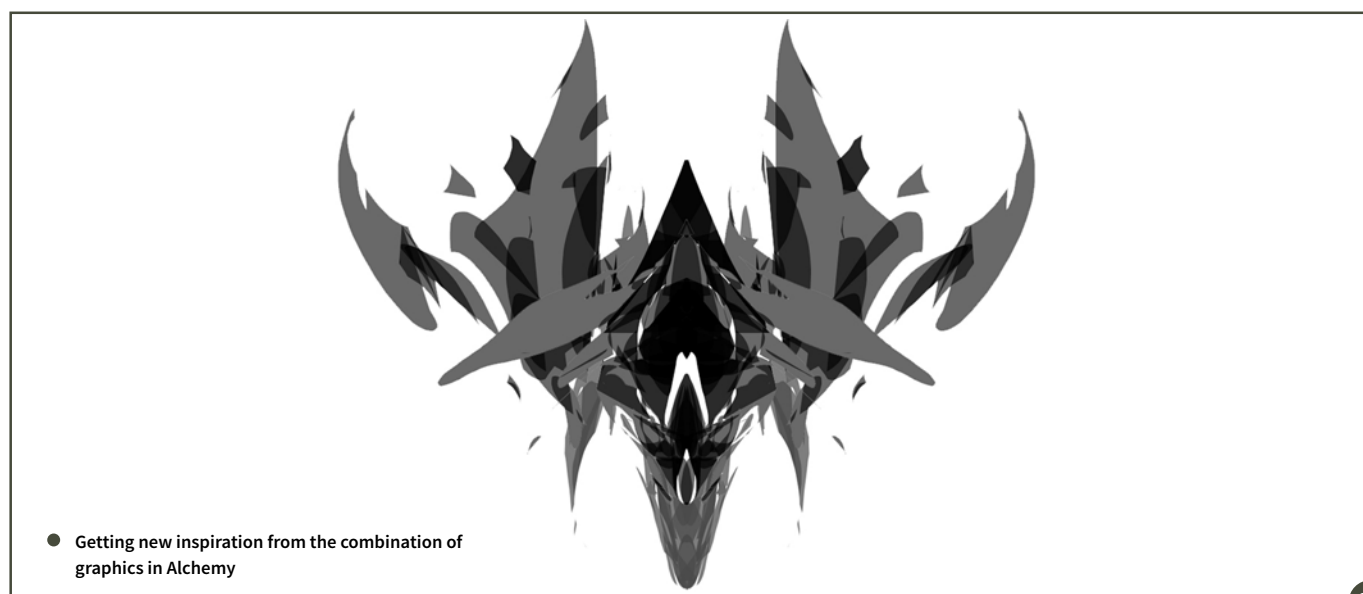
01 Brainstorming: My first task is to gather ideas and inspiring reference images from a range of different sources, and use these

references for brainstorming. I look for images that will help me to convey a strong silhouette, emotion, and functionality to the viewer. I want to create a sci-fi character with some fantasy style elements mixed in. I draw inspiration from a range of existing mechs, robots, and demons.

02 Alchemy thumbnail: In Alchemy, I begin creating thumbnails using the Translucent brush to cover the canvas with random brushstrokes – this method helps me to discover interesting combinations of brushstrokes, that could make good character



01



02

silhouettes. I could also use Photoshop to combine these different elements to bring together the components of the character. Alchemy is a wonderful auxiliary tool, the brushes are especially useful for creating different effects; using these different effects I am able to create a mechanized demon that looks stylized and has large wings to help convey its evilness.

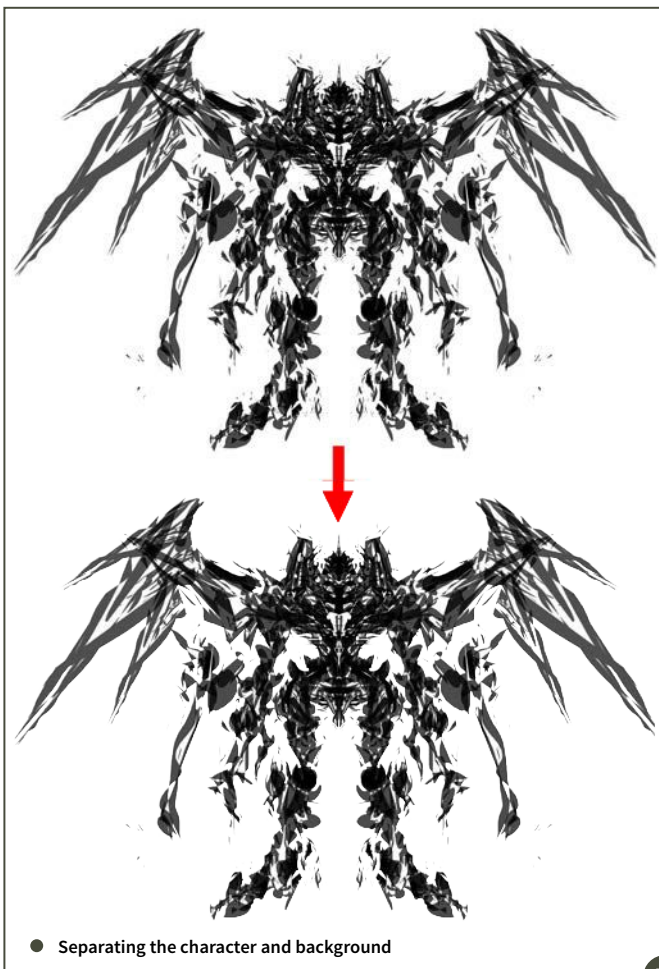
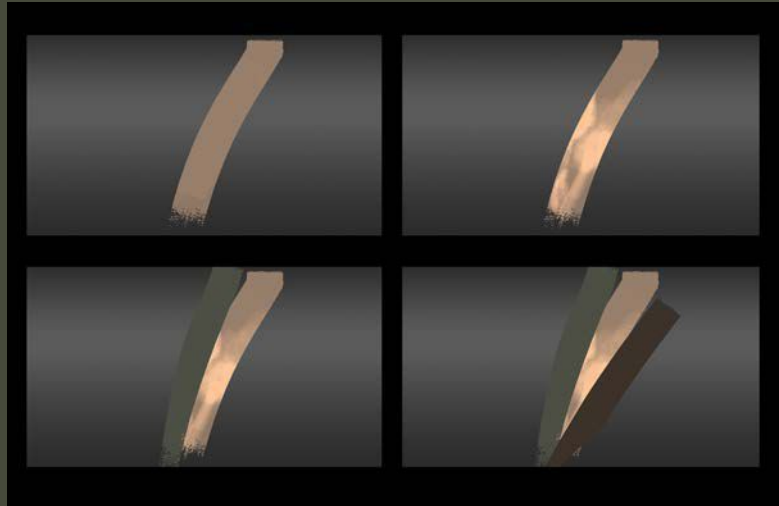
03 Start sketching: I put together a thumbnail based on my experiment from Alchemy and improve this concept in Photoshop. This is an important step to get all of the details and features as close to the original concept as possible. Before I start on the sketch, I delete the white background and create a new layer group (Layer > New > Group) for the character, and separate the character from the background.

04 Layer Group: I create a layer group before sketching to keep the character and background separated, and therefore it is easier to make changes to one without affecting the other. The gray scale sketch looks very flat, so I want to add volume to bring it to ▶

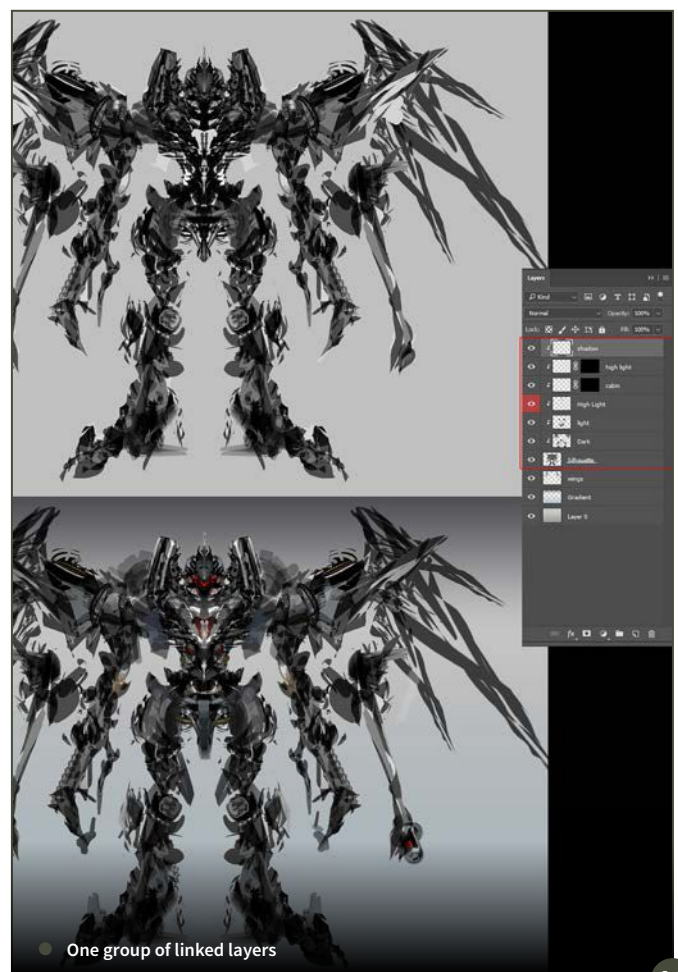
PRO TIPS

Brushwork

Brushwork is very important; one good group of brushwork could substantially improve the image quality. Here is a simple example of my process for creating structure using overlapping brushwork. I use a textured brush with the Dodge tool (O) to create a highlight and texture on the material. Note that one darker layer could adjust the brightness of the highlights and repeating these simple steps is an effective method for creating depth in a picture.



03



04

life. I use another layer group and change the blending modes to Linear Dodge and Multiply. I can also adjust the Hue/Saturation (Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Hue/Saturation) of a color layer to add cooler gray tones.

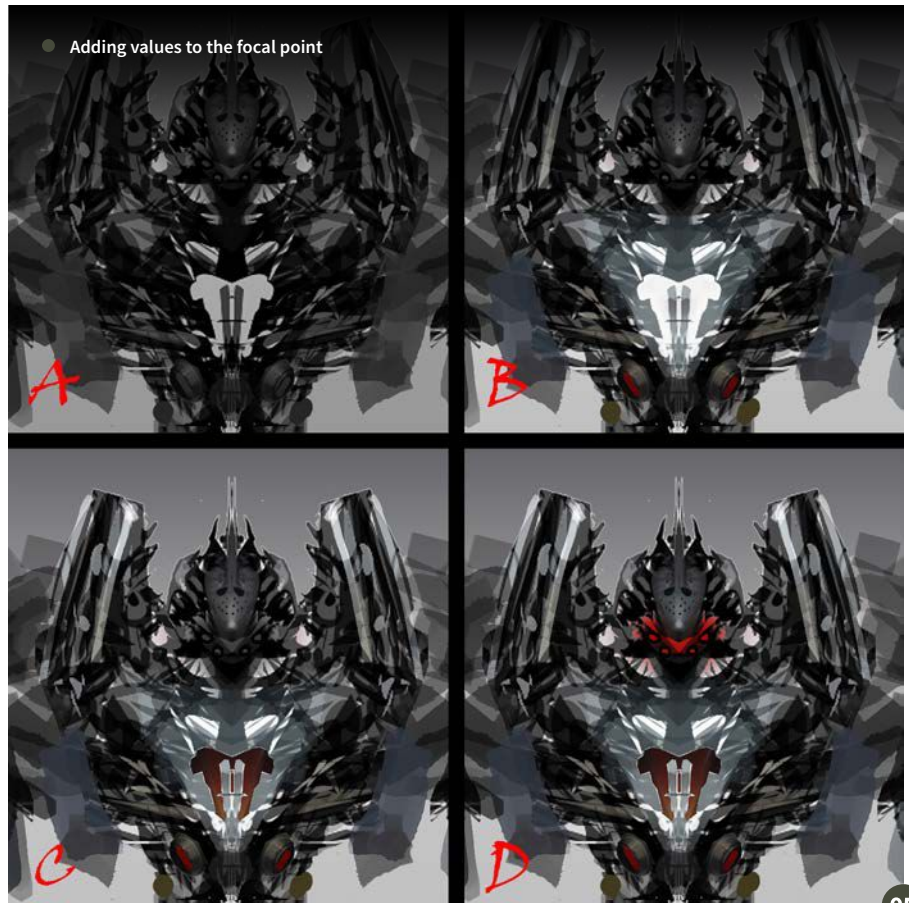
05 Adding values:

I use the following steps to add values to the sketch:

- A) I determine the dark elements using Darken and Multiply blend modes
- B) I create a Light surface using Linear Dodge and Lighten blend modes
- C) I create a chest cavity in a Normal layer
- D) I create a red light effect in the eyes using Overlay and Color blending modes

When I follow these steps I always try to keep the focal point and viewer's point of view in mind – I find this helps me to think about the overall effect, as well as improving the concept.

06 Quality improving: I used many layers to create a better overall effect in Step 05; for me this is a fast and convenient way to create volume through the use of light surfaces on a black silhouette. Due to the systematic layer arrangement, I can easily add more random brushstrokes and textures on the new layers which will impact the next layer. To enhance the color tone and color temperature I use a Soft Light layer which has a combination of green and yellow, and a texture



05

brush. I want to show a rough metal texture on the character, so I use some low saturation color to effectively set off the luminous parts.

07 Concept Improving: During this step I add more interesting elements to enhance the features and overall look of the character while keeping the original concept of a mechanized demon at the front of my

mind. I have the rough concept from Step 02 to remind me of the look I was going for. I want to further develop his evil temperament by giving him extra eyes, fangs, and spikes that cover his head. I also make changes to the weapons on his hands; I change them from guns to sickles and work on the highlights – it is important that there is a connection between looking great and functionality.



● A comparison of the quality improving process

06

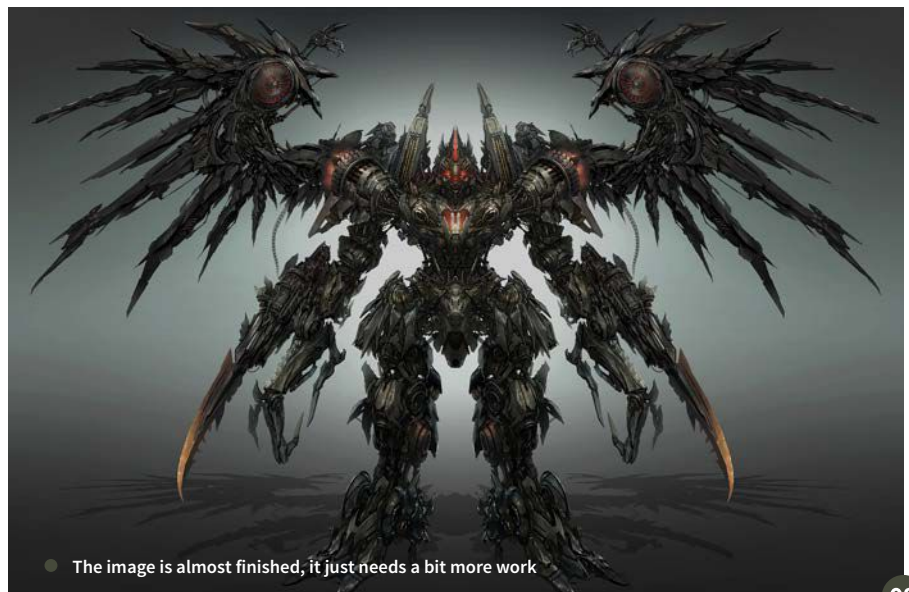


07

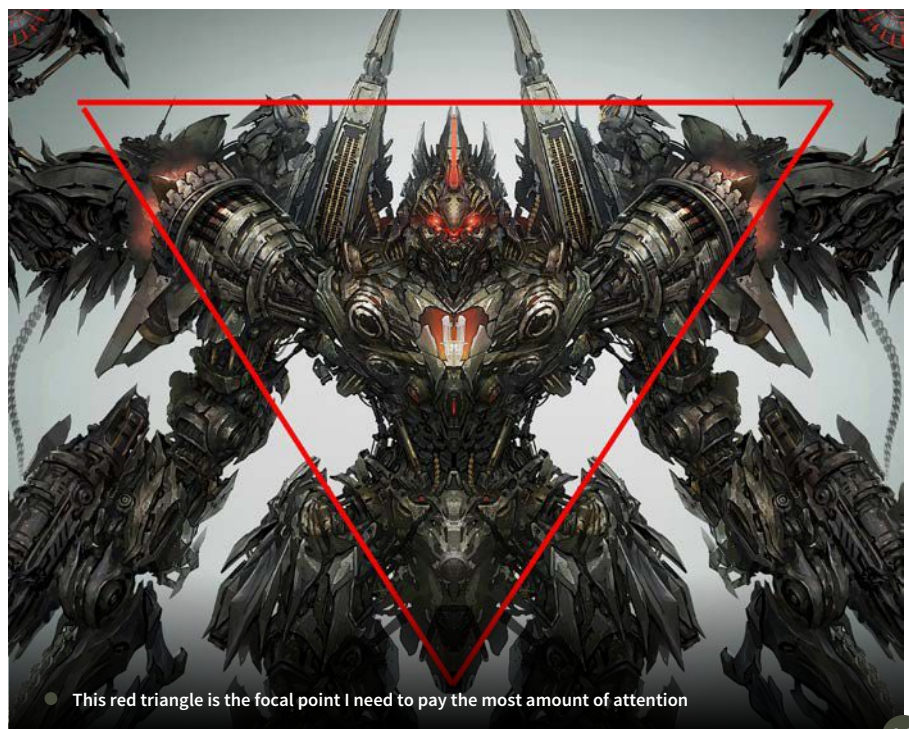
08 Adjustment: Before I continue, I save a backup copy of my PSD (so I can go back if I need to). I merge all of the layers – Step 04 is a time consuming but important part of my process as it allows me to define the final result early on. However, I need to emphasize the main focal point and add some dimensionality to the whole painting. It is also important while making changes that I pay attention to the color temperature, contrast, and lighting.

09 Emphasizing the Viewer Point: I have decided to place the light source above the character so that the bulging chest will be the brightest part of the character, after that the head is second brightest. I want to increase the contrast between the darkest parts of the face and the lights of the eyes. To achieve this I want to create a nice flow from light to dark, this leads the viewer smoothly to the focal point (see red triangle in image). The image is almost complete but the whole thing needs to be brightened, so I use Levels (Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Levels) to lighten the layers to bring up the brightness.

10 Finish Touch: I want to make a few final touches to help bring the character to life and add some dramatic effects. As the focal point is made up of the head and trunk, I add a floodlight effect to the eyes and chest cavity, in addition to brightening these areas using Curves (Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Curves). I also use a layer set to Lighten blending mode to add some lightening between the mechanical feathers, this really helps to bring the character to life and enhance his evilness. With these final few touches the concept is finished. ●



08



09





The Artist



Pei Zhang

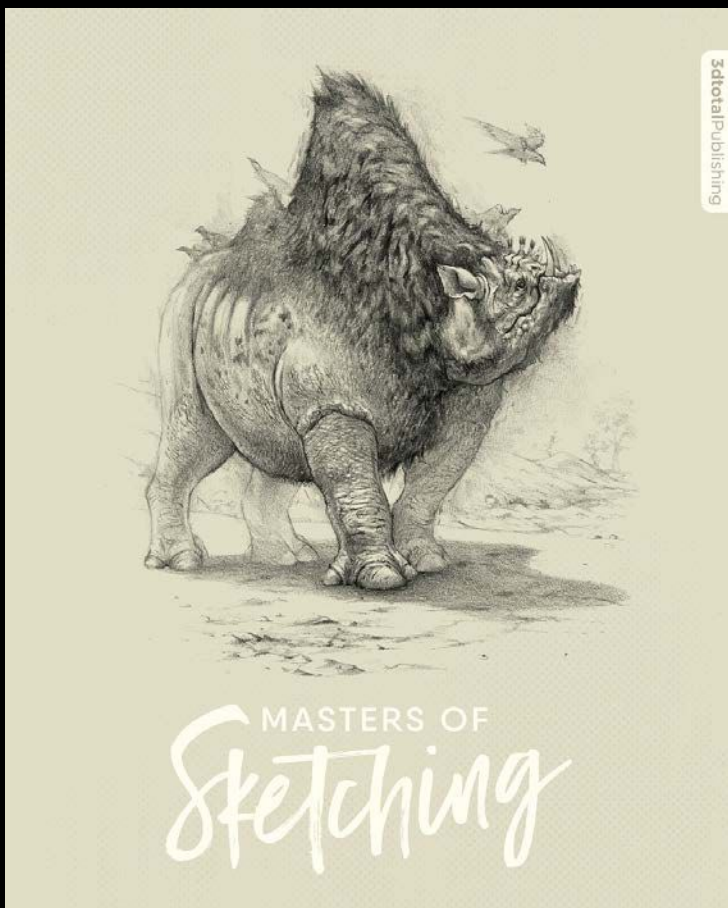
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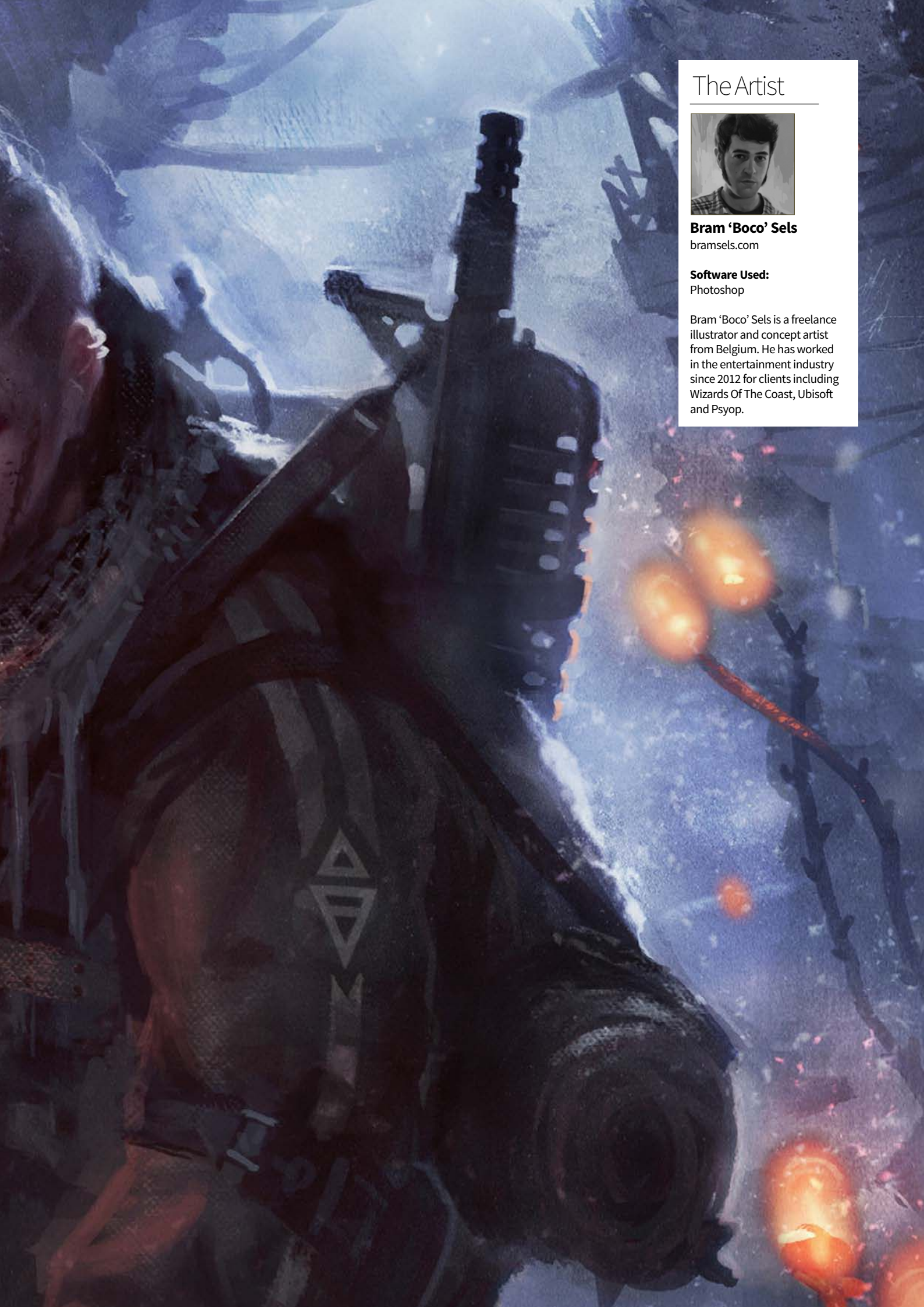
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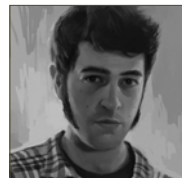
by Bram 'Broco' Sels

See how a class to hone his traditional painting skills aided Bram Sels digital work, and taught him about his own process ▶

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The Artist



Bram 'Boco' Sels

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Software Used:

Photoshop

Bram 'Boco' Sels is a freelance illustrator and concept artist from Belgium. He has worked in the entertainment industry since 2012 for clients including Wizards Of The Coast, Ubisoft and Psyop.

'Create an environment with a figure that takes up at least 1/8th of the canvas and develop your own brush set to do so.' With that briefing and a picture of a Lolcat, the amazing Vanessa Lemen and Jon Foster ended that week's Traditional and Digital Painting class at The Art Department.

This was a class I took to hone my traditional painting skills and look for ways to incorporate

traditional techniques into digital painting. I have always been a big fan of traditional painting and the influence it has on digital artists, so this class was just right for me.

A lot of the lessons focused on oil painting and the difference between building layers of color and value on a real canvas, rather than tweaking them on a digital one. This tutorial gives you an insight into that process.

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Oil painting and traditional media

One of the biggest differences between traditional and digital painting is that traditional painting has more limitations, but that is not necessarily



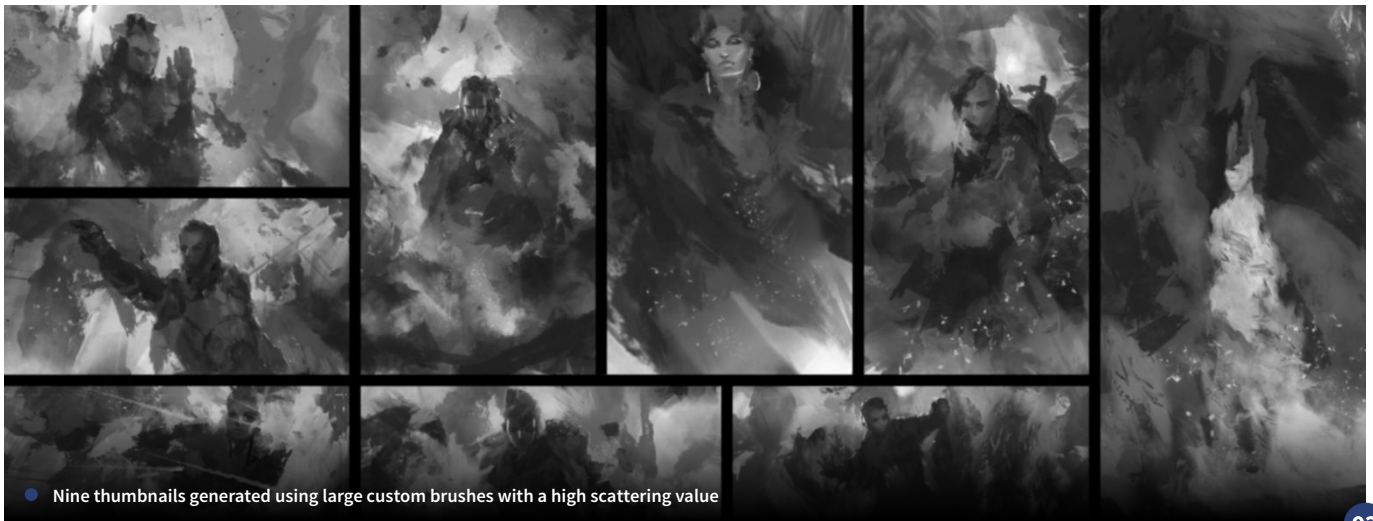
01

- Abstract oil paintings that were easy to create and provided valuable resources for brushes, textures and shapes



- A brush set created from the abstract oil paintings and some black marker sketches of a skull

02



03

a bad thing. Software like Photoshop can easily make beginner painters forget about the big picture. I used to struggle a lot with technicalities, not realizing that the most important things like brushwork, color temperature, composition, anatomy, perspective, and so on, are things that Photoshop cannot do for you.

I find it is always a good idea to get out of my comfort zone, and to try and look at things from a different perspective. Quick experiments with oil paint keep your mind fresh, and in this case they provided the starting point of the brush set I used to create *Serves Me Right*. One of the biggest benefits of using real paintings to create digital brushes is that you get a degree of authenticity, and that gritty painterly feeling that is difficult to recreate digitally.

Thumbnailing it

Creating thumbnails is an important part of the painting process. It gives you the chance to explore options and think about the composition without being distracted by details. It even provides you with a usable underpainting.

After saving the brushes, I opened a new document, toned it gray and used black lines to divide it into nine smaller canvasses. I started experimenting with the settings of the new brushes, scattering them over the canvasses. This is the fun part. When you are trying it yourself, put on some Slayer and just go crazy. Fight the urge to zoom in on a piece, even if you start getting a really good vibe from it. This is not the time to get stuck on details, so paint quickly and intuitively. If any of your compositions do not feel right, throw them out. It is better to do this now than waste time trying to fix them later. ►



04

What's the story?

Once Vanessa and Jon (of the Traditional and Digital Painting class) green-lit the thumbnail, we agreed the composition still needed some tweaking. The character was not balanced in the shot and the environment could support the composition some more.

Putting an abandoned gun in the foreground not only moved the character further back in the environment, but also raised some new questions for the viewer.

The composition was also enhanced by adding some elements like the plants and rocks that helped to lead the viewer's eye to the face,

“I avoided using unnecessary blend modes or adjustment layers at this point because they quickly make a painting look artificial”

which (by following the eyes) introduces the second focal point: the abandoned gun.

Light, particles, and effects

Similar to creating an oil painting, I tried to plan ahead and mix the colors I wanted to use in advance. In this case, I had already decided on a cool environment with some warmer lights and a warm skin tone, and using an extension like Kuler made it easy to create a solid color scheme.

After creating swatches for the color scheme, I toned the entire image blue and started building layers of color above. I avoided using unnecessary blend modes or adjustment layers at this point because they quickly make a painting look artificial.

Another great trick to get a more traditional workflow is to frequently merge all the layers together. It makes you commit to the decisions you took, and keeps the painting process fluent.

I do keep an effect group on top of the illustration, however. In it are layers like snow and fog, blood and dirt, and a noise layer to make the image grittier. The reason for keeping these in a separate



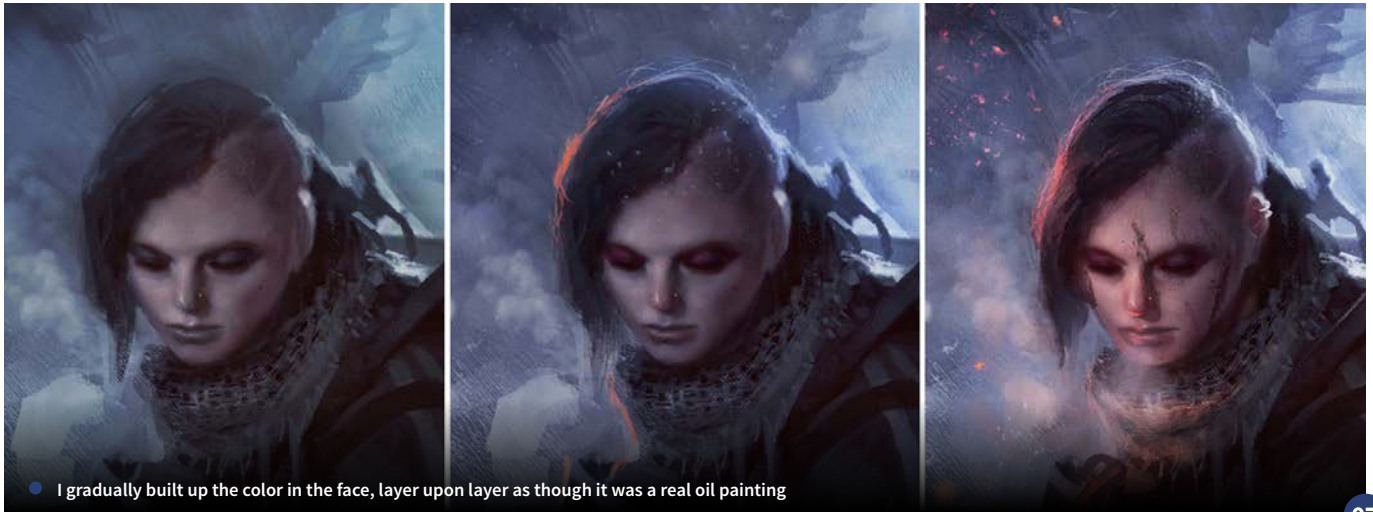
● The image elements naturally focus on the face

05



● A toned background and the layer of warmer color above

06



07

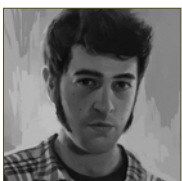
folder is that you can easily hide it that way, and work on the character and environment without being disturbed by the effects on top.

Learning process

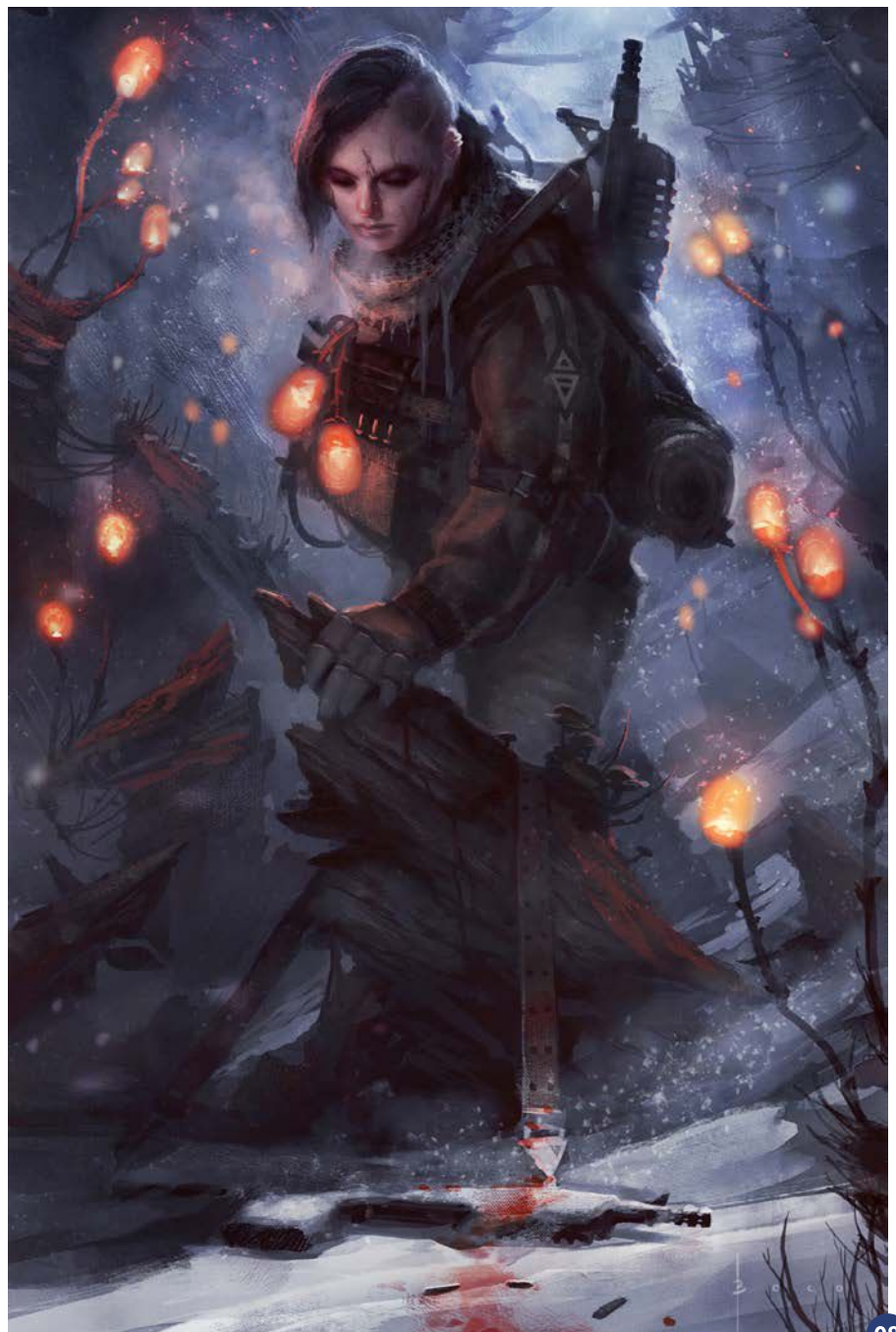
While creating this image I got a better insight into my own painting process and the ways an illustration can be planned out. I learned a lot about how paint could be pushed around on a real canvas as well as on a digital one.

I hope some of these observations were helpful to you too. If not, I'll leave you with this last note: Always remember that art is not a trick, but a skill that needs hard work and dedication to grow. It is a matter of persistence. And since you are reading this, I am guessing you are as keen to learn as I am. So get up early, read some books, take some classes, and paint like there is no tomorrow! ●

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A whimsical winter scene with a girl on a bridge and snow-covered buildings. The background features a cityscape with tall, snow-covered buildings in shades of purple and blue. In the foreground, a girl with dark hair and a red scarf stands on a stone bridge, looking towards the right. The bridge is covered in snow, and there are snow-covered trees and a bench in the lower left. The overall style is painterly and cozy.

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